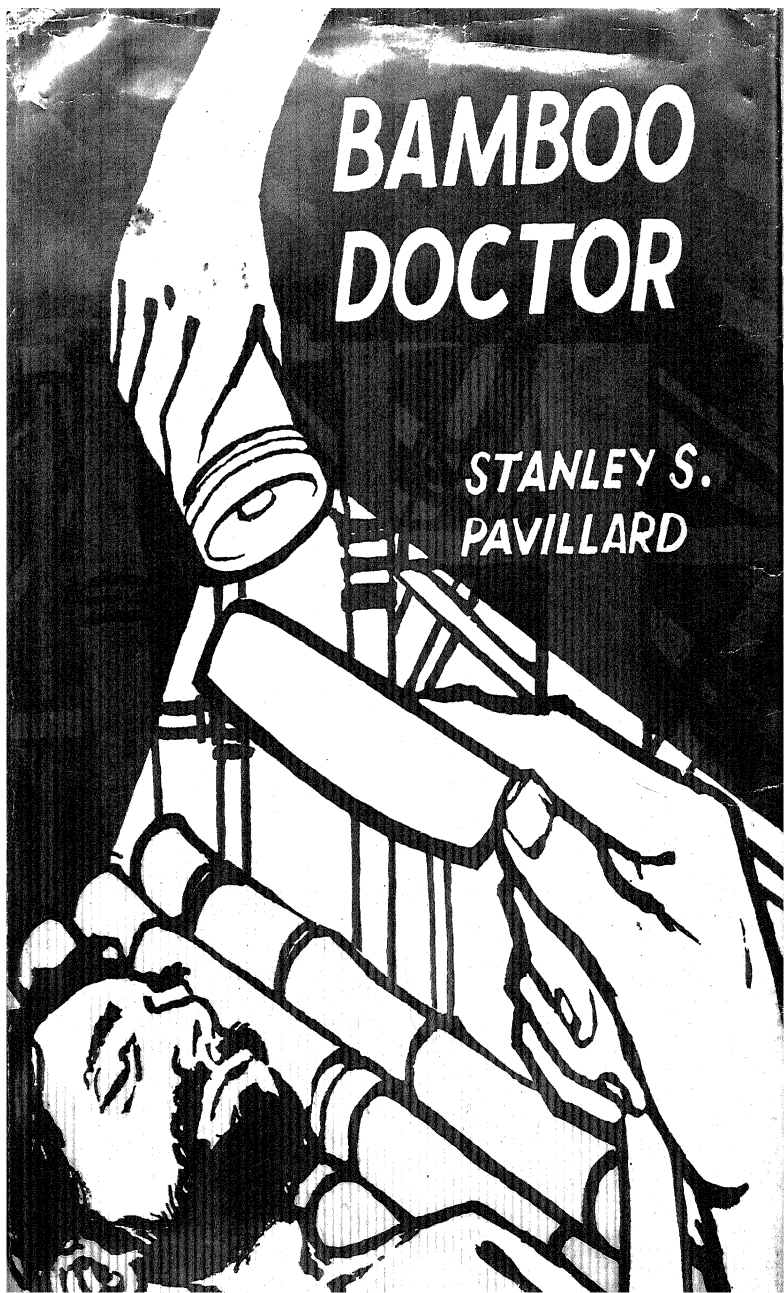


BAMBOO DOCTOR

STANLEY S.
PAVILLARD



12
The Governor of Singapore writes :

Many books have been written about the sufferings and death—of prisoners of war under the Japanese in Siam. There could have been few survivors to tell the tale had it not been for the Medical Officers. With pitiful supplies of drugs, instruments and bandages, and in the most primitive conditions, they toiled wearily to stem the ravages of cholera, dysentery, malaria and general debility, living themselves in the same squalor and privation as their patients and often being savagely beaten in trying to keep a sick man from work on the road. Despite their efforts, thousands died. But more survived.

Stanley Pavillard was one of that band of doctors. His fine work will always be remembered with gratitude and affection by all who came under his care, and especially by his fellow "Vultures" of the Malayan Volunteer Forces.




By his professional skill and his genuinity in finding some way to defeat the odds against him, he saved many from perishing miserably in mud and death. More than that, he gave us courage and hope for the future when it was all too easy to despair.

In this book he tells much of the story of those days. But he has not brought out the faith we all had in him, our confidence that if he was there, things would be all right.

As one of the many who owe so much to him, I am glad of this opportunity to say :

Thank you, Pav.'

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 International boundary
 Railways
 Rivers
 Roads

THAILAND

MAI MAY 23 1984

Scale of Miles

To Rangoon 260 miles

Bay

Bengal

61-11022

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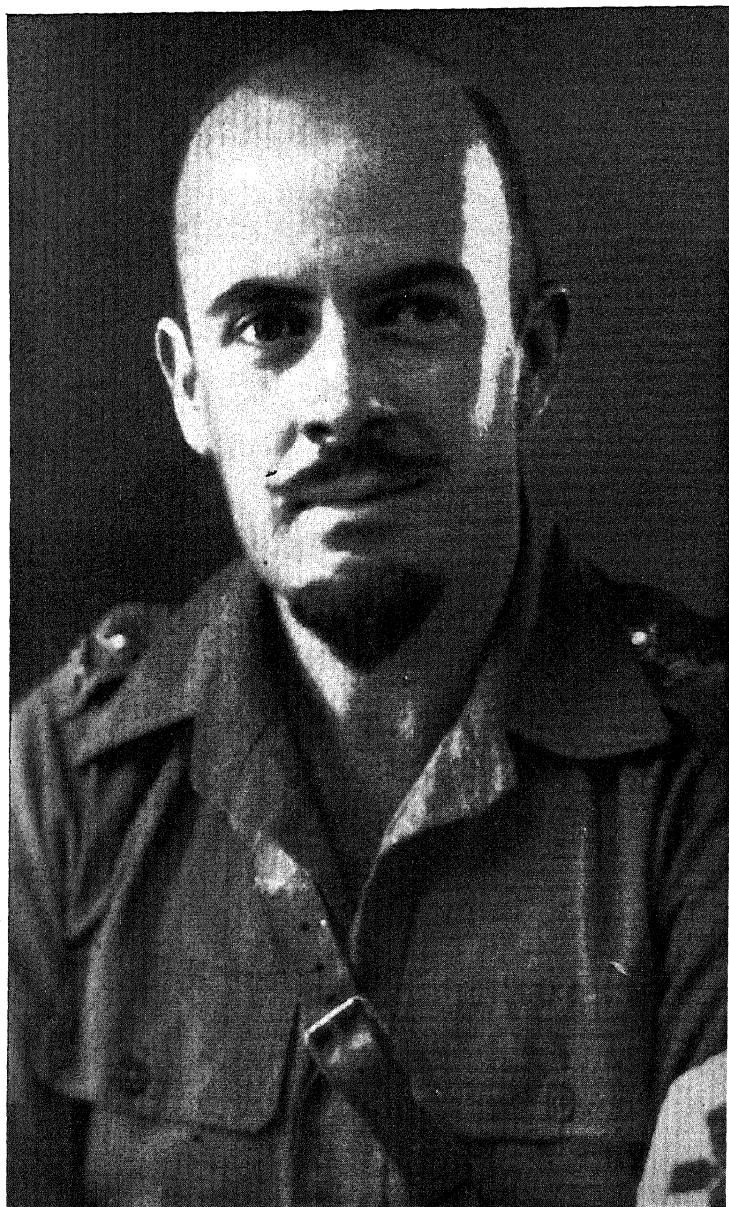
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BAMBOO DOCTOR



THE AUTHOR, AUGUST 1945

BAMBOO DOCTOR

BY

STANLEY S. PAVILLARD

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TO THE ONES
WHO ARE STILL THERE

Foreword

MANY books have been written about the life — and death — of prisoners of war under the Japanese in Siam. There would have been few survivors to tell the tale had it not been for the Medical Officers. With pitiful supplies of drugs, instruments and bandages, and in the most primitive conditions, they toiled unwearyingly to stem the ravages of cholera, dysentery, malaria and general debility, living themselves in the same squalor and privation as their patients and often being savagely beaten in trying to keep a sick man from work on the railway. Despite their efforts, thousands died. But more survived.

Stanley Pavillard was one of that band of doctors. His fine work was recognised by the award of an M.B.E.; and he will always be remembered with gratitude and affection by all who came under his care, and especially by his fellow 'Vultures' of the Malayan Volunteer Forces.

By his professional skill and his ingenuity in finding some way to defeat the odds against him, he saved many from perishing miserably in mud and filth. More than that, he gave us laughter and hope for the future when it was all too easy to despair.

In this book he tells much of the story of those days. But he has not brought out the faith we all had in him, our confidence that if he was there, things would be all right.

As one of the many who owe so much to him, I am glad of this opportunity to say

‘Thank you, Pav.’

W. A. C. GOODE

SINGAPORE,

September, 1959

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Author much regrets that the description, in the first printing of this book, of the execution by shooting of the gunners at Changi was incorrect. The Author had no opportunity of meeting Lt.-Col. Heath, or the other officers who witnessed the execution, on that day or immediately afterwards. The account was based on wrong information from other sources. The passage has now been corrected.

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Chapter One

THERE is something special about early morning in the tropics. The air feels cool and clean, the light refreshes your eyes and doesn't hurt them as it will later: you look around with renewed pleasure and interest, finding the world green and peaceful.

On 8th December, 1941, Ah Hock called me at seven o'clock. I pulled on my bathing trunks and ran down to the pool. There was a dead frog floating on the water: I removed him and then dived, swimming energetically because of the beautiful chill of the crystal-clear water. Then I turned face upwards and floated, letting the water return to stillness while I gazed into the new empty sky and considered my fortunate position.

I was not quite twenty-nine, and it was just a week since I had been appointed Medical Director of the Bedong Group Hospital in Kedah, about thirty miles from the island of Penang. This hospital was maintained jointly by several important rubber companies: it was modern and fully equipped; the Director's post was one of the best, and the best paid, of its kind in Malaya, offering plenty of scope for study and research; and with the job went a large house, built in the old Colonial style, with the ceilings high and the windows big for the sake of coolness.

I was finding it a shade lonely, living all by myself in this big house; but it was wonderful to have my own swimming pool.

I splashed about idly, in the peaceful morning light: Europe and the war seemed very far away. It was all rather ridiculous, since I had left my home and family in Las Palmas for no purpose except to help and do my bit in that same war: but there had been long queues of doctors trying to get into the Navy and the Air Force, and service in the Army had appeared likely to involve a certain amount of walking. (I do not like walking.)

What happened in the end was that I lost all love for filling in forms and waiting in queues, and I applied for a post in Penang: a civilian post, but counting as war work, since a commission as Medical Officer to the local Volunteer Force went with it. They gave me the post, perhaps because of my semi-tropical upbringing, and I sailed East in 1940; but before very long I decided that Penang was a one-horse kind of place, with poor facilities and no privacy (from a merry bachelor's point of view, that is); also, there was too much work. So off I went and settled down in Singapore as full-time M.O. to the Volunteer Forces there.

Singapore was gay and rowdy in those days: no black-out, no air-raid shelters, in fact very little preparation of any kind against a Japanese attack: rumours grew more and more insistent, but there were plenty of parties and always plenty to drink, and it was easy to find comfort and reassurance.

Then, very surprisingly (I was still a young and inexperienced doctor), I found myself resigning my commission and leaving Singapore. I had known Dr. Cross, the Medical Director at Bedong, when I was at Penang, and had been over the hospital several times: he and his wife were good friends to me, and when he died I was very upset, though not surprised. I applied for his

job at Mrs. Cross's suggestion, and not very hopefully; yet before long I was driving north, five hundred miles of green rubber and jungle, and at the end of it a fine modern hospital to run as my own, a lordly house to live in, and this cool delicious swimming pool, death apparently to frogs, but very refreshing to a young doctor with a hard day's work ahead of him.

I climbed out of the pool and sauntered lazily towards the house, still day-dreaming and drying myself vaguely as I went. It was reassuring, after all that war-talk in Singapore, to find that the R.A.F. at least were on their toes: twenty-seven aircraft roared over in close formation, very low, a grand picture in the morning sunlight. They disappeared towards Sungei Petani aerodrome, and I heard distant explosions and gunfire — keen training, I thought; the Japs would get a warm reception if they were foolish enough to attack.

So I showered, and dressed, and breakfasted, and attended to my out-patients, and made my ward rounds. There was a Tamil girl with Vincent's Angina, a nasty mouth infection: I could smell her several yards away. Penicillin now, but then, a preparation of arsenic: none of this was available, so I telephoned through to Georgetown on the island of Penang to have some sent over. It was five past ten in the morning.

I walked away from the telephone in a daze. Fowley, the European chemist at Georgetown, had told me the news: they had seen black smoke rising from Sungei Petani aerodrome, they had heard the noise of bombs from my direction, and I think they were surprised to hear my voice.

Feverishly, I tried to organize my thoughts and make

some kind of plan. Practically every bed in the hospital was occupied, there were no air-raid shelters, no fire-fighting equipment. Christ, what a mess: I shouted for my orderlies, but there it came again, the irregular roaring of those engines — another raid, and this time probably on my hospital: I rushed through the wards like a madman, shouting in English and Malay, 'Jap aeroplanes! Jap bombers! — get under your beds quickly, quickly!' Then flat down on the ground myself as the planes went over, without attacking us: they were making for Sungei Petani again. As soon as they had gone, all the patients swarmed up and about and a general chaos of panic began: I got them under control, packed off those who were well enough back to their own villages, and set everyone else to digging slit trenches; then I drove over to Sungei Petani to find out what had happened and to buy fire-fighting equipment.

The town was a shambles, and partly on fire; natives everywhere, hurrying away with their belongings, and some of them pausing for a moment to see whether the white man could offer them protection or help. But he was helpless too, in this new hell of his own making.

I found the aerodrome, which had been bombed very heavily, and a New Zealand squadron-leader told me the story: the attack had come without warning of any kind, and most of our aircraft had been destroyed on the ground by bombs or bullets. Two Brewster Buffalo fighters had managed to get airborne, but uselessly: their guns had been sabotaged. The extraordinary amount of Fifth Column activity which took place during that night of 7th December, 1941, was confirmed and proved later — I was to see for myself how coconut trees had been felled, white-washed and left pointing like arrows towards

ammunition and petrol dumps — but at the time nothing was suspected; everything went like clockwork for the Japs, and in one morning's bombing they had completely knocked out Sungei Petani as an effective operational aerodrome.

Singapore had been raided just after four in the morning, and we could not understand why no general warning had been sent out at once. Unfortunately, there were to be many more such bunglings during the short course of Malaya's war, starting with the failure to extinguish the lights of Singapore city when the Jap air raid started.

The confusion of the next few days was made worse by rumours, numerous and persistent, and some of them well founded: the Japs had in fact landed on the east coast of Malaya. Their planes flew over several times a day, but never attacked the hospital: before long most of my patients had discharged themselves back to their homes, far away from military targets, although I was kept busy attending to premature births induced by the gunfire.

The commotion of movement and activity reached a climax on the night of 13th December, when I ran out to investigate a vast traffic jam in the main road nearby. Earlier a steady stream of military vehicles had been pouring north, towards the fighting, but now the road was packed with stationary lorries facing south, all full of soldiers lying asleep on top of one another in sheer exhaustion, many of them recently wounded, their bandages stained with bright red blood. The drivers of these lorries were slumped over the wheels fast asleep.

There were no officers about, so I made a sergeant help me get the drivers awake and the roads clear so as to allow traffic to move in both directions.

These worn-out soldiers asleep in the lorries had been in action with practically no sleep or food since the Jap landings on 8th December: they had been pressed by fresh Jap troops continuously, and had never been able to hold them. For one thing, the Japs had far more men, and they threw fresh divisions into the field almost daily; for another, our Command relied upon the natural barriers of the jungle and the flooded paddy fields, when in fact the Japs went through such country like a dose of salts, actually avoiding the main roads, so that our troops were constantly being by-passed and dodged rather than attacked frontally, and were in constant danger of being surrounded.

Of the fighting troops who took the brunt of the Jap onslaught, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and the 2nd Gordon Highlanders, together with some other famous regiments, deserve special mention. One battalion fought the Japs all the way down the Malay Peninsula, arriving in Singapore with a total strength of fifteen men. Our men were indeed hard pressed and outnumbered from the start. (On the other hand, when Singapore capitulated some hundred thousand military personnel were taken prisoner: but these included a great many cooks, clerks, and so forth, together with the bulk of the 18th Division, which arrived intact to reinforce the city just before the capitulation.)

By now the sergeant and I had managed to clear the road for two-way traffic; then an officer arrived on a motor-cycle and ordered all the southbound troops to return north, towards the fighting. There was much grumbling and swearing before they complied: I could see their physical condition, and they didn't seem to have much strength left for fighting. Apparently much

of the confusion was caused by unauthorized and contradictory orders: the Fifth Columnists were still at work.

I went back to bed and tried to sleep, with the help of a good stiff whisky; but before long I heard gunfire, and soon afterwards a nearby planter telephoned — the Japs were all round us, I must run for my life. For a moment I caught the infection of his panic, and bellowed for Ah Hock to get my clothes packed and stowed in the car; then, afraid of making a fool of myself, I telephoned the Chairman of my Hospital Committee, just to make sure. He lived at the Harvard Estate, five miles to the north, five miles nearer to the Japs: no, it wasn't as bad as that yet; I had better go back to bed, and meet him and his people at the estate club-house at daybreak.

When I told Ah Hock to take the suitcases out of the car again, he seemed to think I was crazy or drunk.

In the morning the noise of gunfire was still audible. I found I had one patient left, and after attending to him I drove north, telling Ah Hock to go to his own people if I didn't return within two hours. It was a difficult journey, the roads being packed with military traffic and also with refugees, walking, cycling, in bullock carts. I managed to negotiate all this confusion and the military police as well, and arrived at the Harvard Estate club-house just as fighting started up in earnest and very noisily in that immediate vicinity. Various Europeans were getting into their cars hurriedly: they were loaded up with luggage, and I cursed myself for leaving mine at home.

The situation was quite out of hand: the Japs had broken through, they were coming down the main road, they were infiltrating into the rubber estates around, they were bombing and machine-gunning the main roads to the south: our safest plan was to use the narrow estate

tide of refugees and military traffic, with the noise of gunfire louder and nearer all the time.

My hospital, I discovered, had been taken over as an advanced dressing station, but the young R.A.M.C. lieutenant in charge told me that he was expecting orders to evacuate at any moment. Shells were already whining overhead as I filled the car with what I considered the most important drugs — quinine, atebrin, emetine, vitamins, and so forth — together with the best microscope and some surgical equipment. An orderly rescued my two suitcases from the house and they were strapped to the back of the car: just then we received the order to evacuate. I wanted to set fire to the medical stores, but the R.A.M.C. officer thought that this might attract Japanese gunfire.

So I drove off to join the growing flood of traffic towards Sungei Petani, abandoning my hospital to the Japanese just twelve days after I had arrived so hopefully to take it over.

I reached Sungei Petani just after five; Jones was waiting for me at the police station, as we had arranged, but rather anxiously. I had the pleasure of filling my petrol tank without paying: there was nobody to pay.

Jones told me that people had been coming to the police station to ask for advice or instructions about whether or not to destroy rubber factories, power stations, and so forth. But there was no official policy and nobody dared to take the responsibility of a decision; what happened, of course, was that practically everything was left intact to be taken over by the enemy.

We drove down to the temporary headquarters of the previous day; but there was nothing more we could do

about our respective jobs, and we decided to push on south to Kulim, where I intended to leave my car-load of drugs and equipment at the General Hospital.

We had not travelled far down the road when we met a car coming in the opposite direction and flying a small Union Jack: it slowed down, signalling us to stop. We recognized it as belonging to the British Adviser at Kedah. He asked us where we had come from, and we were able to give him first-hand details of developments in and around Sungei Petani. Judging by the expression on his face he did not much like what I told him about the General Hospital there; he objected strongly to my car-load of medicines, and when I explained that the Bedong Group Hospital was a private concern and that I had to keep its materials out of enemy hands, he became very excited and seemed to lose all self-control, telling his A.D.C. to take my name and saying that he would report the matter to Singapore. The astonishing thing is that he did. He was plainly very overwrought, and having personally seen nothing of the Jap advance he could understand neither the dangers we had faced nor the decisions we had been obliged to take.

We arrived at Kulim well after dark, and after we had left the medicines at the General Hospital Jones took me to a nearby rubber estate where the manager put us up for the night; the planter's wife and children had already been taken away for safety, and for the same reason some twenty other European planters had moved into the bungalow to sleep. After a meal and some drinks we felt better and able to relax for the night.

Next morning an official report was put out at Kulim, saying that the Japs had been not only held but even pushed back to a place well north of Bedong. This was

good news if true: I decided to investigate, and after picking up some quinine and atebirin and also the microscope from Kulim General Hospital, I drove north, and stopped at the Emergency D.O.'s bungalow for a chat. But while we were having coffee the 'phone rang and Broadhurst, the acting Chief of Police at Sungei Petani, told us that the Japs were on the point of taking the town and were actually reported to be moving down the Kroh Road, which was to the south of Kulim. This was shattering news: we were in immediate danger of being cut off. So once again and for the last time I got into my car and headed south: not for Kulim this time — there was no time to collect the rest of my medicines — but for Ipoh in Perak, where I arrived that same afternoon, 15th December, 1941.

So far, Ipoh had experienced no air raids. Dr. Anderson, the Chief Health Officer, very kindly put me up in his house, which was very close to Ipoh aerodrome. There I met various planter friends, including Jones, who being a Volunteer R.A.F. officer was under orders to go to Singapore. Several of us went to see him off at the station next morning: there we noticed with pleasure a long goods train heavily loaded with bombs, guns and ammunition.

While we were talking happily about the effect this train-load would have on the Japs, some Brewster Buffaloes roared up from the aerodrome nearby, and almost at once we heard machine-guns firing and cannon-shells bursting. Then, low and heading for us, we saw several Japanese planes: we remembered the ammunition train and dived madly across the square towards the shelter. I heard a terrible scream — a European woman stood in the middle of the square,

paralysed with fear: at once and without thinking I found myself flat on the ground, holding her down in a tight rugger tackle while she struggled hysterically: all round us, Jap bullets whined and threw up little clouds of dust, and I lay sick with fear, thinking of anti-personnel bombs and waiting for the explosion of the ammunition train. My prayers were answered, and in that first run the Japs dropped no bombs. As they passed over and swung round for the next attack I dragged the woman breathlessly to the shelter, where she collapsed and vomited; the shelter was full, soon the ground shook and we heard heavy detonations and knew that the ammunition train had been hit; still people kept crowding in, and one man, a major, kept bawling 'My God, my God, I have gone blind!' until somebody told him to take his sun-glasses off.

This was Ipoh's first air raid, and the population and the authorities alike were completely unprepared for it. Many of the Asians failed to understand the danger: some stood gaping at the planes instead of taking shelter, others protected their heads leaving the rest of the body exposed. Many of these were badly wounded in buttocks, legs and heels. The raid was over by ten in the morning but Dr. Anderson and I worked continuously until late in the evening, patching up the victims. It was a harrowing experience: the half-inch bullet fired by Japanese aircraft causes dreadful wounds.

Next morning we went on with the same work, until at noon we heard that Jap forces had taken the island of Penang and were advancing down Province Wellesley towards Ipoh. Once again we had to move quickly to avoid being cut off; and now, having eaten a hurried lunch and joined the stream of traffic heading towards Kuala Lumpur, we noticed for the first time signs of

hostility among certain of the local people. They stood by the roadside watching the white man's preparations and departure, and shouted insults, accusing us of cowardice: they probably had no idea that at this stage of the war torture and death automatically awaited any white man who fell into Jap hands, but they had been our friends, and it was unpleasant and somehow unreal to hear them talk in such a fashion.

We arrived at Kuala Lumpur in the late afternoon and found the town crowded, since all the Europeans of North Malaya and Penang seemed to be there on their way to Singapore, men, women and children. There was no hotel accommodation to be had and most families slept in their cars: I shared a double bed in a bungalow with five other men. In the morning I continued my journey, calling first at the station in the hope of giving someone a lift, since the trains were over-crowded and liable to be shot up by Japanese aircraft; a European who had his wife and children with him was only too glad to accept my offer, and we drove to Singapore without further incident. I dropped my evacuees at Raffles Hotel and went on to my old house at 42 Scott's Road.

I now had a breathing-space in which to consider my situation and make a plan. As I saw it there were two alternatives. The army was crying out for doctors to join the R.A.M.C., and offered them promotion to captain after a year's service or less: some doctors were able to fiddle very quick promotion indeed. This was an attractive proposition, but I felt a sense of loyalty towards my old battalion, the 1st S.S.V.F., and a strong desire to take up again the commission which I had renounced on my appointment to Bedong.

An officer in the Straits Settlements Volunteer Forces held a Governor's commission, as against a King's commission, but the pay and the conditions of service were to all intents and purposes the same as in the regular army. The Ordinance establishing the Volunteers made no provision at all for a separate medical branch: doctors were to be commissioned in the rank of lieutenant and counted as ordinary officers on battalion strength — technically speaking, as combatants. The great snag was that the length of service required before promotion to captain was quoted as three years. This was all very well in peace time, but whoever drafted the Ordinance apparently overlooked the possibility of continuous service in war.

I went to Volunteer Headquarters to talk it over and was reassured in very definite terms: my promotion to captain would not be long delayed. On this basis I became for the second time M.O. of the 1st S.S.V.F. as from 19th December, 1941. Headquarters were at the Government English School in Geylang Road: the R.A.P. was at 64 Tanjong Katong Road, in a big Chinese house.

When I reported for duty the C.O., Lt.-Col. Newey, asked me about the fighting up country: I told him what I had seen, and gave it as my opinion that the Japs would be in Johore Bahru, opposite Singapore Causeway, within six weeks, if they kept up their rate of advance. (This shook him, but I wasn't far out — they got there in eight weeks.)

I had learnt a good deal in the eleven days since the fighting started: the noise of gunfire and bombs, the art of self-protection in a slit trench, quick methods of first aid and life-saving surgery, and above all the importance of appearing calm and giving confidence to the wounded in

any emergency. These lessons, learnt in a brutal school, saved many lives before long.

My R.A.P. was well situated, except that when the bombing started we felt it was too near to Kallang Aerodrome. It was very spacious, and I was able to use it as a small hospital for minor cases, thus relieving pressure on the Military Hospital. There were ample supplies of medicines, dressings and equipment, but nothing was unpacked or arranged accessibly for instant use. I put this right on my first day, and then set about the training and organizing of my medical orderlies under Sergeant Lewis, who had worked in the Education Department: a born teacher and a good organizer, and an invaluable man later on in Siam.

We Volunteers were defending a sector from the Singapore Swimming Club to the Seaview Hotel and a little beyond, our neighbours being the Manchester Regiment. I went round the sector examining the men's living conditions in detail and in particular noting the positions of minefields.

So far the battalion had not been blooded. But very soon after I took over, on 20th December, we had an air raid just before midnight, the bombs coming first and the warning afterwards, which turned out to be the usual order of things. We had two casualties: the sentry on duty had his face cut open by a bomb splinter, from the outer margin of his left eye right across his left ear, which was cut in half; but it was a surface injury, not damaging the facial nerve, and after stitching it healed, leaving practically no disfigurement.

The other victim suffered damage of a more permanent kind. Diving too late towards the slit trenches, he heard bombs falling behind and very wisely threw himself

face down: a bomb splinter passed between his legs and whipped his left testicle away. After first aid I sent him to the Military Hospital, and later on he was evacuated to India before the fall of Singapore; perhaps he was not so unfortunate, for although functioning on one cylinder only he never became a prisoner of war. Most of us would have preferred to suffer his deprivation twice over, if we had only known what was in store for us.

Christmas Day in Singapore had a fairly peace-time air about it. I inspected the rations sent up for the battalion's Christmas dinner without enthusiasm, and asked permission to absent myself from the Mess and have lunch at the Tanglin Club. Sergeant Lewis was a member of the Club and I took him with me: the club was full of temporary and honorary members, including several senior officers, and various disapproving looks were cast in our direction, to remind us that officers and sergeants should not sit down together. (But we were both members, and not temporary or honorary ones either.) I sat and listened to the hilarious laughter, and wondered how many of these people had been up country and seen the fighting.

As the Japs advanced rapidly down the Malay Peninsula, air raids on Singapore became more frequent and heavier; the planes came over like clockwork at ten every morning, usually in formations of twenty-seven. Casualties among the Volunteers were few: we were well dispersed and had good slit trenches. The civilians suffered most. Singapore had a population of well over a million and a half, and this was now being increased rapidly by refugees and our retreating forces.

My R.A.P. at 64 Tanjong Katong Road was situated almost opposite a big Chinese school, which had been converted into a Medical Aid Station, staffed by several

civilian doctors, most of them Eurasians. After air raids I attended to my own casualties first and would then go across the road and give a helping hand with the hundreds of severely injured civilians. Here as at Ipoh stupidity and the absence of air-raid precautions made things much worse. People would hide their heads leaving the rest of their bodies exposed: I had to remove any number of bomb and shell splinters from their heels, using a pair of pliers from the tool kit of my car, since artery forceps were not strong enough. Having got a tight hold on the splinter I would quickly twist and pull and out it would come. Operations of this kind were usually carried out without anaesthesia, quickly and without much pain, since the injured part was numb. But there were plenty of more serious injuries: I remember a young Chinese girl who had most of her left shoulder and chest blown away, exposing her still beating heart.

In such cases we had terrible decisions to take. Lying afterwards in bed at night, waiting for sleep to cloud over the vivid pictures of what my eyes had seen and my hands had tried to repair, I prayed for guidance, and I think my prayers were answered; for in some apparently hopeless cases I persevered for no other reason than the habit instilled by training, and was rewarded with almost miraculous recovery. To the outsider, our quick matter-of-fact manner of handling mangled humanity might have appeared callous, but inwardly we suffered and felt ourselves ageing as the war progressed. For reward we had our patients' trust and gratitude.

There was a general belief, shared by our military authorities, that there would be no serious air raids at night: the Japanese were all night-blind, their eyes were so weak that they could not see without glasses. This

comfortable belief was soon shattered, and we were attacked night after night, not only with incendiaries but with high explosives; this night bombing nearly cost me my life, not by enemy action but at the hands of a hysterical officer. It is a Standing Order that in actual combat an R.A.P. Medical Officer must not leave his post to attend injured personnel outside his immediate area, particularly when casualties are coming in. On this particular night there was a heavy raid, incendiaries first and then high explosive bombs; the all-clear had been given when an excited British officer rushed into the R.A.P. demanding that I should accompany him to Geylang Road, about half a mile away, where bombs had struck a house and a wooden rafter had fallen, pinning down his batman, and, according to him, almost severing his leg. I told the officer that I could not go as it was too far away and casualties were already coming in, adding that it was also against Standing Orders. 'To hell with Standing Orders', and pulling out his revolver he said 'Listen, Doctor, you will come, or I will shoot you dead!' I realized as I looked down the barrel of his Webley .45 that he meant business and I said quickly 'Put that bloody thing down and I will come; but, mind you, under protest'. He had a car and within a few minutes we arrived on the scene; I was taken to an upstairs room where by the aid of a flash-light I saw the unfortunate batman, his leg pinned down by a heavy rafter; he was naked and bleeding freely; also on the floor and naked was a pretty girl, dead. I quickly applied a tourniquet to the shattered and bleeding leg and after giving him an injection of intravenous morphia which knocked him out immediately, we lifted the rafter and sent him off by ambulance to the Military Hospital, followed in his car

by the excited officer who had nearly sent me to the next world. I wondered later how the officer knew that his batman was in that particular house; he was very probably in a downstairs room on similar business when the house was struck.

When I returned to the R.A.P. there were several casualties waiting for treatment; fortunately, none were severe and in a short time we had cleansed, stitched and dressed the wounds and given each patient an anti-tetanus shot.

Still the night's work wasn't over: we had hardly got down to cigarettes and sergeant-major's tea when we heard a hideous crash from the road outside the R.A.P.; an ambulance had collided with a motor-cycle which lay smashed in the monsoon drain, its rider nowhere to be seen. The night's fires had been put out and it was pitch dark; we searched and groped about until I heard a moan from under the ambulance, and putting my hand underneath clutched a sockful of crushed bones. We got the poor devil out and on to a stretcher, but he died at the R.A.P. before we could do anything for him.

This pattern of our days and nights went on and on; we crouched endlessly in slit trenches with dry mouths and pounding hearts, listening to the soft whistle of bombs intended no doubt for Kallang Aerodrome but all too liable to overshoot their mark and come our way instead.

The Japanese intelligence was good and they had Fifth Columnists working for them: it soon became obvious that they knew where everything was, my R.A.P. included. I suspected that they had a radio transmitter working for them in our neighbourhood: I even thought I could hear the humming noise of its generator. One night I saw quite plainly a flashing light, signalling to the

enemy from our own garden; Sergeant Lewis and I called the R.A.F. officers out from their mess next door, and we all searched excitedly and even fired a few shots, but without result, since the light in question was a star, hidden and revealed in turn by the gentle swaying of a tree. But the transmitter was probably real enough. The Japs knew where the R.A.F. Operations Room was, and they bombed it out: I was very annoyed when it was set up again in a wooden hut, not 150 yards from the R.A.P. That same evening we found ourselves crouching in slit trenches, coughing and choking in cordite fumes while the earth shook: someone behind me vomited, I could feel his hot vomit on my sweaty back: then, at last, a strange empty vibrating silence and a deep breath. Suddenly we heard shouts from the R.A.F. mess: 'I am hit, I am bleeding!' We jumped up and saw two very shaken officers struggling out of what had been their trench: a bomb — it must have been a small one — had exploded about three feet from where they were sheltering, striking and breaking a water main, and in the darkness they had taken the fluid drenching them to be their own blood. We took them to the R.A.P. for whisky treatment. But what shook me was to hear next day a Japanese voice from Radio Penang apologizing to us for this attack, and pointing out that it was the natural consequence of operational units sheltering near the Red Cross.

The episode made me sensitive. I raised hell two days later when a couple of armoured cars were parked next door, and got them removed, half expecting an attack that night on the spot where they had been. But none came. Perhaps the transmitter was miles away.

By now, I was burning with desire to see a Jap aircraft actually shot down. I used to jump up and out of my slit

trench the moment they had passed over to see the effect of our anti-aircraft fire, which was usually well off the target. So I arranged to go across one morning and see an ack-ack battery in action: it was in our sector, and the C.O. was a friend of mine. My plan was to go over just before ten, so as to be in place when the Japs came over in their punctual formations of twenty-seven. But that morning my sick parade was longer than usual, and the raid started, on an exceptionally heavy scale, just as I left the R.A.P., so I went no further. After the raid I had a few casualties to deal with, and then I went round to apologize to my friend for not turning up, but found the post a complete shambles: two of the gun emplacements had received direct hits, killing all the gun-crews and setting the ammunition on fire: the C.O. was wandering about in a daze, his nose and ears bleeding. I quite lost my enthusiasm to see a Jap plane shot down. We discovered later that this raid had been planned for the express purpose of silencing the ack-ack batteries in and around Kallang Aerodrome.

One day we were visited by Sir Shenton Thomas, Governor of Singapore; I was introduced to him at the R.A.P. and he shook my hand warmly, saying with a big grin, 'Oh, so you are Pavillard! I have heard of you up country.' I believe he winked: and I remembered that I had been reported for removing the medicines from my hospital at Bedong without proper official authority. H.E. now went on to inspect the R.A.P., talking to the orderlies and patients and praising our slit trenches, which were the best he had seen in Singapore. (As you cannot dig deeper than three or four feet there without striking water, we had built our trenches up at the sides and then roofed them in with wood and turf: this gave

excellent protection against the daily and by now almost continuous shower of splinters.)

I made up my mind to call on the Governor about my promotion to captain: the promise made to me when I returned to the Volunteers had not been fulfilled, and I was told that only H.E. could give the necessary order. So one morning I marched up the drive of Government House, full of purpose, but suddenly found myself crouching in the monsoon drain at the side. Japanese attentions gave me time to think things over, and after the raid I turned back, feeling that H.E. might have more important things to worry about just then than my promotion.

Not long before the capitulation of Singapore the 18th Division arrived, struggling ashore without their equipment after their ship, the *Empress of Asia*, had been sunk off-shore. One of the survivors, a regular R.A.M.C. major, came to see me and asked if I had any champagne. 'What, no champagne in an R.A.P.? My dear sir, don't you realize that it is a most important item of medical comfort, very useful for the treatment of shock? — You must indent for some at once!' I took this to be a joke and indented for two cases in that spirit, but they came the next day: we made room for them in the fridge beside the anti-tetanus vaccine, and they certainly eased the pain of air raids and near-misses.

Even at this stage in the war and with the Japs nearly at Johore Bahru, our Intelligence still believed that they would invade Singapore from the sea. We waited patiently along our seafront sector and the big fifteen-inch naval guns waited there too, unable to point anywhere except out to sea. Eventually, just before Singapore capitulated

some of these guns were turned round and one could hear their heavy shells travelling overhead, roaring like an express train in a tunnel but not likely to do much damage on arrival, being armour-piercing and liable to bury themselves deep into the ground before exploding.

By the beginning of February the strain was beginning to tell. We had all experienced narrow escapes and were living on our nerves, acting more by instinct or reflex than in any sort of intelligent or systematic way. When a shell or bomb exploded people flung themselves to the ground automatically, face downwards. Those of us who had to carry on with our work in spite of the bombs and shells were living of course under a heavier strain still: it was not possible for us to take to our slit trenches when the warning sounded, so we kept a lookout man in the garden watching the attacking aircraft, ready to blow a whistle if they appeared to be coming straight towards the R.A.P. When we heard the whistle we rushed to the slit trenches, or if there was not time for that we dropped to the floor.

Looking at the faces which appeared before me on the daily sick parades and also at the people I passed in the street, I began to see the signs of shell-shock: the furtive look, the trembling lips and hands, the cold sweat, the hesitant speech, the general manner of a hunted wild animal.

I remember one man in particular, a Volunteer sergeant who refused absolutely to go into hospital. As a Volunteer medical officer I could use my discretion more than an official regimental M.O. was ever allowed to; I gave this man a prescription for some luminal, but took no disciplinary action except that I sent him to bed for a couple of days. His wife called on me and I explained the

position to her: she went to the chemists to fetch the luminal for him.

The next day I was on my way from the R.A.P. to Battalion Headquarters when the Japs attacked heavily: several bombs fell very close to Battalion Headquarters, and when I arrived I was called to see this sergeant. He was bathed in a cold sweat, very agitated, not able to talk properly: I gave him a shot of morphia and left him to sleep it off, and then went back to the R.A.P. to look after casualties.

The point of this story is that later on when I was at Changi after being taken prisoner I was called to give evidence at a court martial where this same sergeant was being tried *in absentia* for desertion. At that moment I lost sight of him, since I was admitted myself to the General Hospital. For some time past I had not been well and I suspected myself of having developed a gastric ulcer; this now became very obvious and it made life a misery. The pain kept me awake most of the night and it was with the greatest difficulty that I could keep down a little diluted condensed milk. This was not very surprising in view of the amount of work I was doing, the nervous tension we were all living under, and the irregular meals. At that time I lived chiefly on bully beef, pickles, Worcester sauce, strong tea, cigarettes, and alcoholic corpse-revivers.

I was not the only one and I did not at all want to report sick. But on the morning of 7th February I discovered that my stools were black, which meant that the ulcer was bleeding internally. I went to the General Hospital for an X-ray, and when they had had a look at what was going on inside me I was not allowed to return to the R.A.P.; they put me to bed straight away in spite of my protests

and gave me large doses of sedatives to relieve the pain and control the bleeding.

Later that day Sergeant Lewis came to see me, bringing my small raw-hide attaché case. I had no other clothes than the ones I was wearing when admitted. Various plans for collecting clothes and shoes fell through.

The night of 7th February will never be forgotten by those who were then in Singapore: during this night the Japs landed on Singapore Island. Before actually landing they put up a terrific softening-up barrage, and for several hours all kinds of artillery and aircraft bombarded the part of Singapore Island which faces across to Johore Bahru on the mainland. Facing them we had some battle-seasoned troops, and also several units which had only recently been withdrawn from another war zone but who had very unfortunately not completed their battle training; there were two thousand of these and during the barrage they left their positions and stampeded hysterically down to the Singapore Harbour Board spreading fantastic rumours of the tortures which the Japanese were inflicting upon Europeans who fell into their hands. Their collapse made it much easier for the Japs to get their first foothold on the island; and they were not slow to consolidate and follow up the advantage they had gained in this way.

Meanwhile, in the Harbour Board, a strictly organized and disciplined evacuation of women and children was taking place. Suddenly the stampeding troops appeared. Fighting broke out between them and the Military Police, who were out-numbered and overpowered and the troops were able to commandeer one of the evacuation ships and put out to sea.

Some weeks later, when we were prisoners at Changi,

we learned by means of our secret wireless how these deserting troops had arrived in Australia and been given a triumphant reception as gallant survivors of the defence of Singapore. But these were not the only ones who deserted before capitulation: there was one officer, charged with the issuing of permits, who promptly signed his own permit to leave the island and other permits as well for some of his personal male friends. People felt strongly about all this when the news of it leaked out: and those concerned were probably wise to keep away from Malaya after the war.

For a couple of days after being admitted to the General Hospital I slept most of the time, waking only to take my strict milk diet; the pains disappeared, and soon the ulcer seemed to have stopped bleeding. I still felt weak and helpless, but enormous numbers were being admitted to to the hospital and I got up to give a hand.

From the people being admitted we learned how the war was going on Singapore Island. All sorts of rumours of Japanese atrocities were being circulated, not only by Asian civilians but also by European troops. This was very upsetting, and the morale of our troops was not improved when on 11th February General Wavell issued an Order of the Day accusing the troops in the bluntest language possible of being cowards and a disgrace to the Empire. Presumably this was meant to get the men fighting mad and act as a psychological shot in the arm; in fact it completely misfired or had the opposite effect. Many officers in the field refused absolutely to read the Order out to their men. Those of the men who did hear of its content responded to it in almost mutinous terms. These men had taken the brunt of the Japanese attack continuously since 18th December; almost from the first

day they had had no air support, practically no reinforcements were available to relieve them, and the Japanese were able to throw fresh troops into action every day. Our men had fought a rearguard action continuously by day and night all the way down the Malayan Peninsula and they arrived in Singapore utterly worn out and in many cases wounded. In the circumstances, they didn't fancy being called cowards.

If the authorities had intended to encourage the troops to make a last suicidal attack, they would have done better to issue a rum ration all round, instead of abuse; this was often requested by commanders in the field but never allowed, although vast quantities of Naval rum were available and were in fact destroyed later on to stop the Japs from getting them.

Four days before the fall of Singapore city the Japs captured the McRitchie reservoir; they had previously cut off the water supply from the mainland, and it was now obvious that the end could not be far away: a city with more than one and a half million inhabitants cannot carry on for long in a tropical climate without water.

By now the General Hospital stood right in the line of the Japanese artillery fire; we could hear the shells going over, but few of them fell near us.

The situation was altering rapidly: Singapore city was being attacked from three sides on a semi-circular front. The authorities had at last stopped believing that the Japs were going to attack from the sea, and the Volunteers, including my own unit, had been sent up the line. Presumably there still was a line: the impression one got was of all hell let loose everywhere simultaneously: from any high point one could see fires raging in every direction, and hear the noise of exploding bombs

and shells and the rattle of machine-gun fire all over the city, all day and all night. From time to time, and more frequently as time went on, vast heavy detonations occurred, shaking the ground and making one's eardrums ache; at such moments one was liable to hear hysterical screams from someone whose nerves could stand it no longer.

People were dying in hundreds at the General Hospital, and no form of conventional or even decent burial was possible: even if we had been able to find time, the cemeteries were already in Jap hands. So a big pit was dug in the hospital grounds and used daily: it is there today, the common grave of uncounted hundreds, of all colours, all races, all religions.

Still we worked at the hospital day and night, dressing wounds and throwing out the dead. We smelt of sweat, blood and putrefaction; the water had been cut off and the lavatories were overflowing, so that we had to use the hospital grounds, apprehensively; shell splinters were flying everywhere, and I remembered our first Volunteer casualty.

Still the fighting went on, after a fashion; a few wounded members of the 18th Division came into the hospital and we learned that some of their men had managed to find equipment and were standing up to the Japs. But we also heard from Volunteers and regular soldiers that these 18th Division men were an absolute menace, quite unable to tell a Japanese from a Chinese or a Malay. Many units of that division never fired a shot, having lost all their equipment when the *Empress of Asia* went down: they went straight from their sunken ship to the P.O.W. camp at Changi.

Friday, 13th February, 1942: a day never to be for-

gotten. The Japs intensified their shelling and their aerial bombardment of the city: a rumour spread around that they were being attacked in the rear by large numbers of fresh Canadian troops, and when this turned out to be nonsense it left us all more bitterly disillusioned than before. By now one had to shout if one wanted to be heard.

Then the news filtered back to us that they had massacred the sick and wounded at the Alexander Military Hospital.

Saturday and Sunday, the weekend: days meant for cricket matches and church-going. Blood, death, flies; grey unshaven faces, stinking breath; the mind a vacuum, doped, hypnotized. An order came through ominously: we must destroy all alcoholic drinks. The Japs were upon us, victorious and sex-starved.

Then, at four o'clock on Sunday afternoon, something new and terrible: silence. We switched on the wireless: 'Singapore has capitulated by order of the Governor and Commander-in-Chief. You are to remain where you are. You are to cease fire immediately.'

We sat there twitching and staring at one another in that nerve-racking silence, broken only by occasional shattering screams. The battle for Singapore was over, but it went on and would go on for many years to come as a nightmare in the minds of those who suffered it.

On Monday, 16th February, we saw a Japanese in uniform for the first time; he was a colonel, a little man dragging a huge sword behind him. Through an interpreter he announced that we had to evacuate the hospital completely by mid-day on Wednesday 18th, as it was required by the Imperial Japanese Army. This

confirmed our suspicions that the hospital had been spared on purpose. We asked the colonel where our sick and wounded were to go; he shrugged his shoulders and said that it was up to us; this was an order from the Imperial Japanese Army and the hospital had to be evacuated by Wednesday. And he strutted out, dragging his sword behind him.

However, the Japs realized that a very large proportion of the sick and wounded were military personnel, and they gave permission for any civilian doctor to stay with the army and be treated as a military doctor if he wished.

This would have been an excellent thing, as there were a great many civilian doctors in Singapore at the time and very few service medical officers. Unfortunately, a great many doctors chose to abandon the army for the sake of the very faint hope that they might be repatriated as civilian prisoners. I know personally that not one of these civilian doctors became a voluntary P.O.W. with the army; they all became civilian internees, none of them were repatriated, and most of them spent the next three and a half years in internment camps, chopping wood, growing vegetables, acting as sanitary orderlies, and becoming expert bridge players. Their specialized knowledge would have saved many lives in Siam and Burma.

Soon after the Jap colonel had finished giving his orders a message came from Alexander Military Hospital asking for doctors to help with the survivors of the massacre which had taken place on the previous Friday. Major O'Driscoe, I.M.S., and I decided to go; there was no transport, and the three-mile walk was not devoid of danger. No one yet knew what the Japanese soldiers' attitude would be to Europeans and to officers in particular, and we had heard abundant rumours of brutality. As

we went, wearing our red cross armlets conspicuously, we passed many bodies, already bloated with the process of decomposition, and the air was full of the sweet acrid smell of putrefaction. Everywhere there were unexploded shells and bombs, which we treated with distant respect.

On the way we met our second Jap, a small sentry in a big pith helmet. O'Driscoe and I agreed to salute him to be on the safe side; he bowed very politely in reply, at the same time making a noise not unlike that of a duck drinking water as he sucked air through his protruding teeth. Behind him we now noticed a Japanese officer; he probably thought we were saluting him, and he bowed and beckoned us over, saying in fairly good English 'Ah, you are doctors, please come sit with me: would you care for a cigarette? I studied in Germany but I like reading *Gray's Anatomy*. You are on your way to the hospital — very sad, Japanese very sad — sayonara!' He dismissed us with a bow and a hiss; we saluted and departed, the little sentry smiling as we passed him. We walked up the hospital drive, passing a stretcher party carrying a body covered in caked blood and already swollen with decomposition; other stretcher parties were going and coming between the hospital and a big open pit in the grounds.

We went in and saw several bodies lying along the corridor awaiting the stretcher parties; on the floor and beside the empty beds were big brown stains. In the lower wards there were men still alive, with a look of haunted horror on their faces; when they saw us their lips moved and they made animal noises, through which we heard the word 'water' repeatedly.

It took a powerful mental effort to come to grips with the situation. There were no orderlies about except for the stretcher parties, but in a room near the entrance we

found a figure slumped over a desk, resting his head on his arms. When we approached he sat up suddenly, with a look in his eye as if he had seen the devil. He was a staff-sergeant: we offered him a cigarette and after a while got the story out of him in snatches. Some Indian troops had been retreating from the Japanese, and came through the hospital grounds and into the wards themselves. Tropical hospitals are big airy buildings and often the ground floor wards have only a low wall; these Indian troops climbed this wall into the hospital and retreated through the wards, firing at the Japs all the time. According to eye-witnesses, the Japs were foaming at the mouth and appeared to be doped: they entered the lower wards and started to bayonet everyone in sight, including those lying wounded in their beds. They went on into the operating theatre where a wounded soldier, a Malayan Volunteer, was having a leg amputated: everyone in the theatre was bayoneted, including the patient. The surgeon was struck over the heart but by good fortune he had his cigarette case in his left breast pocket; this deflected the bayonet and he only received a flesh wound on the left shoulder, and as he fell backwards he shouted to the orderly behind him to fall down and pretend to be dead. This saved the man's life and the surgeon was later awarded the M.C.

While this massacre was going on there was frightful confusion in the upper wards, and those who could bolted for shelter. It was said that one senior medical officer was later awarded the O.B.E. for winning the race and locking himself in the W.C.

One R.A.M.C. officer, however, grabbed a Red Cross flag and came down to try and stop the massacre: he was taken away from the hospital together with some two

hundred other men and never seen again. His name was Captain Alladyce: his courageous attempt was witnessed by several people, but received no official commendation.

That same evening, more Jap troops arrived and tied up the surviving patients and orderlies in groups with wire: the staff-sergeant who told us of this showed us where the wire had cut into his wrists. They were left tied like this for several days without food or water and then cut loose.

On the morning of our arrival, a Japanese general had visited the hospital and had apologized to the survivors, explaining that in the heat of battle their front-line troops had failed to realize what the building was. He also said that he was sending two water wagons, water being the most urgent need of the moment.

O'Driscoe and I did what we could and then returned to the General Hospital where we found the evacuation in full swing; it was a heart-breaking job as many of the patients were most unlikely to survive any kind of move. Most of them were taken to private houses, and in the morning I moved to a house in Mount Sophia, next door to the Government House compound. Here the sick and wounded lay on the floor, where they had at least some shelter from the sun and tropical rain. We found a water-point still functioning on the Government House golf course: soon those who could walk were washing themselves, and the cool water not only removed the grime of weeks but also, and even more deliciously, relaxed the tension under which we had been living. We bathed naked, jabbering away and splashing each other like little boys and occasionally giving an apprehensive look towards Government House which still stood there

in all its glory, as if we expected to see H.E. come out like a schoolmaster and chivvy us away.

My own house at Scott's Road was not far away from Mount Sophia, and I tried to get there to collect some clean clothes, but unsuccessfully.

On 20th February, orders were received that we were to move next morning to join the rest of the Allied troops, who had been disarmed after the capitulation and told to intern themselves at Changi. A warning was issued that any P.O.W. found outside the Changi perimeter wire after that date would be summarily executed unless accompanied by a Jap guard or having an official pass.

Since I knew Singapore well, while most of those at Mount Sophia were from the 18th Division and had only just arrived, I was detailed to lead a party of two hundred and fifty sick and wounded from Singapore to Changi. This meant a fifteen-mile walk, as no transport was available. We started off in the early morning and had to march by devious ways, as the Japs had sealed off many roads in the course of their search for collaborators with the British. This search gave many Asians an opportunity to settle old scores: thousands and thousands of innocent Chinese and other Asians, having been denounced to the Japanese, were herded into lorries without any kind of investigation, taken away, and shot.

We hobbled painfully along the streets, many of us with the help of crutches and sticks. The local people lined the pavements to watch us, many of them waving Japanese flags and jeering and shouting at us, presumably in order to please their new masters. But as we came up to them and they were able to see that in spite of our situation and our weakness we were marching as if on parade, with

heads erect and looking neither to the right nor to the left, the jeering stopped.

We had been defeated in battle and were prisoners, but we all felt that this was a moment of moral victory. That day remains for me a very proud one: the Japanese had defeated us but they had not broken our spirit, and I was leading the column.

Chapter Two

AT about five o'clock that afternoon we arrived at Changi completely exhausted. I handed over my charges at Roberts Barracks, a large building which had been crudely adapted into a hospital, and walked another weary mile to the rickety wooden hut which had been allocated to the Volunteer officers.

I had no belongings of any kind except for the contents of my small raw-hide attaché case, and a certain amount of second-hand clothing, blood stained and lousy. I was sweaty, tired and weak; my knees and ankle joints were hot and stiff after the fifteen-mile walk from Singapore; I had lived on nothing more solid than milk and slops ever since my admission to the General Hospital; and now I was experiencing frequent and excruciating attacks of colic, always followed by diarrhoea.

About a hundred thousand men had been hurriedly concentrated into a small area at Changi, and things were chaotic; human nature being what it is, everyone jockeyed for position and paid no attention to the next man's needs. Even my own fellow officers seemed to have wasted no time in joining what the Navy calls the Jack Club. They had spread themselves out nicely across the floor of the hut and made no effort to find room for me. One officer, Captain Wearne, moved up and made a space; I passed a restless night, unable to sleep and continually obliged to run out to the bore-hole nearby. In the

morning my temperature was 104° and Walter Wearne helped me up the hill to Kitchener Barracks; the lower floor of this building had been converted into a big ward for other ranks, while upstairs one half was the officers' mess and the other half an officers' ward. The place was crowded but at last I had a bed to lie on.

Some of the patients of this hospital were wounded but the majority were dysentery cases, cursing one another incessantly for sitting too long on the pan. There was still no running water and the lavatories were flushed twice a day by a fatigue party, who brought water up from the sea in four-gallon kerosene tins; this was quite inadequate and the lavatories were usually overflowing. Drinking water was rationed to half a pint daily per man.

I was treated at first with Epsom salts, which made me much worse; but after a couple of days I managed to scrounge some M. and B. 693 tablets and brought my dysentery under control. I was under the medical care of an R.A.M.C. captain who before the war had been a missionary in darkest Africa. It was a mistake on my part to feel flattered by the enormous interest he took in my ulcer: when we sat down together to the hospital diet, which consisted of potatoes with a small slice of bully beef, my solicitous medical adviser would grab my ration of bully beef off my plate. 'Now, now, doctor,' he would say 'remember your ulcer!'

One morning he came to my bed saying in a quiet and immensely meaningful voice 'Good morning, Pav; have you seen the light?' I sat up quickly in my bed: 'What light?' I asked excitedly. I was thinking of the rumours which had buzzed around Singapore earlier on, to the effect that Canadian troops had landed at Port Swettenham, had fought the Japs down the Malayan Peninsula,

were on the point of attacking Singapore from the north; they must have reached Johore Bahru, I thought, and started signalling to us to make us ready for a combined attack on the Japanese. But the doctor looked at me gently and said 'Why, the spiritual light, of course!' My reply was not very spiritual.

I began to feel better, my spirits revived a little, and life seemed to be worth living. The atmosphere at Changi was peaceful and there was nothing to do all day long but bathe naked and sun ourselves on the beach. But one afternoon we saw a formidable Task Force of the Japanese Navy steaming slowly up Changi straits in the direction of the Naval base: aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers, torpedo boats, submarines, supply ships. They moved up the Straits with Japanese sailors lining the rails, standing smartly to attention; on the beach at the time hundreds of P.O.W.s were bathing and they began to make rude signs and gestures towards the Japanese ships. This no doubt eased their feelings but it earned them no gratitude from the rest of us, since bathing was forbidden as a punishment for this disrespect towards the Imperial Navy, and we went dirty, scratching our sweaty bodies. This Task Force, we discovered after the war, was meant for an attack on Colombo, which was however never made.

Life became a good deal bleaker after we were forbidden to bathe; the empty hopelessness of our life made it seem that there was nothing worth living for, and it brought out unpleasant sides of people's characters. I had two little towels, one green and the other yellow, which I had been given by a quartermaster at the General Hospital; one morning at Changi I found that the green towel had mysteriously disappeared, and soon afterwards I found it by the bed of a Lieutenant-Colonel in the R.A.M.C.

Instead of mild irritation I felt an uncontrollable, almost murderous fury: when you have lost almost everything, you become very possessive about the little that remains. Trying to control my temper I informed the Lt.-Col. that this towel was mine. He denied it. I said I was bloody well going to get it back. He looked at me carefully, and handed it over without a word. Next morning, I found it had gone again, and I was told immediately that I was to be discharged from the hospital as cured.

So back I went to our 'Mess' and raised once again the thorny question of my promotion to captain. Lt.-Col. Newey knew all about it, and he said defensively that pending official recognition and proper documentation after the war, I could put up an extra pip. Thus I became a captain, which was a great help: as a lieutenant M.O., not even R.A.M.C., I was continually coming up against rank, and the Volunteers suffered accordingly.

Even after the war this question was not settled officially until 1947; I made continual representations to the Colonial Office and the War Office, and my promotion was eventually gazetted and back-dated to 1st February, 1942.

I now found myself sharing a small first-floor room with five other Volunteer officers.

At this stage, the Japanese refused altogether to feed us: they said we were war criminals, having destroyed our guns contrary to the terms of the armistice. They would not believe that this had been done before the armistice, in fact as soon as it became evident that Singapore was going to fall; so we were to be starved, apparently, as a sort of collective punishment. But there was a good deal of food, of various kinds, about the place, and our

command gave orders that it was all to be handed in to the R.A.S.C. depot for equal distribution to the various units until such time as the Japanese decided to feed us. We Volunteers obeyed this order scrupulously, and were rather peeved to see how many other units retained large quantities of bully beef. Our block was immediately in front of the R.A.S.C. depot and at night we could hear and see well-planned burglaries in progress; once a six-pound tin of bully beef was dropped in the road and we salvaged it and put it to good use.

But before long the food we had taken into Changi was exhausted, and men began to die of starvation. Strong representations were made to the Japanese, who eventually condescended to place us on quarter-rations of rice: about a cupful of cooked rice per man, three times a day.

This diet had a peculiar effect: we had to be continually urinating, and often I had to spend ten or fifteen pennies in the course of a night. In consequence of this I made a new friend. I had been up so often that I could grope my way to the pan while still half asleep: once when I did this I was woken up rudely by a horrible cursing and swearing issuing from where the pan should have been. One of my room mates had fallen asleep on the throne and I had irrigated his face; we had not been friends before, but for some reason we were afterwards, which goes to show that there are more ways than one of making friends and influencing people.

The semi-starvation diet made us very weak, and when we caught dysentery, as most of us did, we recovered very slowly. We all tried in various ways to supplement our diet; many of us tried the big slugs which were very abundant at Changi: when cooked they were like rubber.

Hibiscus leaves served for spinach. The lucky ones occasionally caught a stray dog or cat. The weevils in our rice could be thought of as a kind of meat ration.

The flies were having the time of their lives, since it was the start of the dry season and there was plenty of refuse everywhere. One day a friend in a working party brought us some balachong, a kind of paste made of prawns and small fish, dried and powdered. This smells like nothing on earth; it is sold in the shape of a loaf, you cut it and grill it and it then looks like a piece of toast; you crush it over cooked rice and it imparts a salty, anchovy-like flavour; but when it is raw it smells putrid and attracts flies in a big way, especially bluebottles.

I thought I would be clever and make anchovy sauce, so instead of grilling the balachong I shook it up in water and poured it over my rice: it did not taste too bad and it certainly helped me to eat this extremely insipid food. The next day I hungrily poured out a generous helping of my home-made anchovy sauce over my rice ration, and out came hundreds of live maggots which had incubated overnight. I must have been a bit squeamish in those early days; I threw the rice away. No doubt it contained any amount of valuable protein. Now I had to wait, ravenous, for my next meal.

As time went on, the shortage of food made us very weak and apathetic, and we showed various symptoms of beri-beri and other deficiency diseases; we also became constipated in a spectacular fashion. For most of us, the period between bowel movements settled down at ten or twelve days; later on in Siam I met a man who swore he had not used the lavatory for twenty-nine days, and there were any number in the twenty-day bracket. Various very undignified techniques were necessary to ease this condition.

This was unpleasant, but the effects of vitamin deficiency were more serious. We began to feel that our feet did not belong to us, that we were walking on cottonwool; at the same time the soles of the feet burned as if they were on fire. As the disease progressed, first the legs would start to swell, and then the swelling would travel upwards until in some cases the testicles looked like footballs. Sometimes the disease attacked the nervous system, and we lost muscular control of our feet.

Walking uphill or going upstairs was hell in any case and left one completely exhausted and breathless. We walked in jerks and stopped every few paces to gather our strength. I had a good deal of walking to do, and I spent all my spare time trying to make a wooden bicycle, a contraption with two wheels on a frame, the idea being that by sitting on this frame I could propel myself along using my feet as one would on a scooter. I devoted a good deal of time and thought to this invention, but most unfortunately I had only got as far as the front wheel when I left Changi.

I was one of several doctors who shared an M.I. room. We staggered the hours of our sick parades, and when they were over we had the long and painful task of visiting those men who were too weak to attend. We had some very sick men indeed among the Volunteers; Kitchener Barracks and Roberts Hospital were full and they had to stay where they were in 'C' block. Many of them had no blankets, since most of the belongings of the 1st S.S.V.F. had been left behind at Battalion Headquarters. I knew that there were any number of blankets and any amount of medical equipment at Roberts Hospital, but the staff there seemed most unwilling to part with any of this material. One day in desperation I walked a weary mile

to visit them with my new medical orderly, Lance-Corporal Riley, R.A.M.C.: we found a very reasonable Q.M.S. in charge of the hospital stores: he gave us six blankets and two bedpans, which we were immediately compelled to return by an officious colonel, whose action did nothing for him or his hospital but probably accelerated some poor fellow's death.

Morale was doubtful at Changi and human nature did not always appear in the prettiest light. Feeling ran especially high against those who had left Singapore without authority before the capitulation. I mentioned earlier a Volunteer sergeant who refused to be admitted to hospital at one stage during the fighting; later on, when his battalion moved up the line, he had run away from Singapore and it was now decided to court martial him *in absentia*. I listened to the evidence, and it became very obvious to me that the prosecuting officers were inspired by resentful envy of this man's freedom, as much as by any more correct motive. I gave evidence on his behalf, saying that he was suffering from shell-shock and pointing out that he had refused to go to hospital. His condition must have deteriorated after that, and he could not be held responsible for his actions. Many of those concerned were very much annoyed when the charge of desertion was dropped as a result of this medical evidence.

Already thousands of minor rackets and swindles were being organized among the prisoners at Changi. Every day various parties of men left the camp to work in Singapore under Jap guards and to collect rations, and they used to bring back with them all kinds of desirable items which could be flogged around the barrack blocks afterwards at fantastic black-market prices. Very few people seemed to have any sense of decency or responsi-

bility, or any interest in the principle of fair shares for all: people lived by their cunning and their wits and sometimes by their military seniority. The weak ones went under.

Rumours constantly went round the camp to the effect that allied forces were attacking the Japs in the rear on the mainland: none of us expected to be in prison very long. One day we heard a terrific explosion from the direction of Singapore, and we rushed out in great excitement hoping to see some of our own aircraft. But there were none, and that evening when the working parties returned to camp we learned that the explosion had taken place at our old Battalion Headquarters in Geylang Road. Later on I passed the site of this explosion and saw an area of at least half a square mile completely flattened. It turned out that the Japanese had been storing in our old headquarters any number of land mines, which had been laid previously along the sea front and now dug up under their instructions; these mines were badly corroded and the explosion was probably accidental, not the work of disaffected Chinese as was said at the time.

This feeling that the war was going to be over fairly soon made many prisoners, especially the Volunteers, think a good deal about what was going to happen after they were set free. They were anxious of course to get back to their work, to re-organize the rubber and tin industries; also they felt very sensitive about their standing as white men, members of a ruling race. For this reason the Volunteers were very reluctant to be seen working in the streets as coolies; and even more reluctant to be sent overseas. The Japanese were calling for parties, to work not only in Singapore but in other countries as well, and there was a good deal of argument

about whether Volunteers should go. The regular army felt that they should; the senior officers at Changi were regulars, they liked their peaceful, idle existence there, and were only too anxious to find suckers to do the work for them.

In the end I was sent out on one of these working parties myself. There was a senior medical officer living in great style at Changi, in a house of his own and with his wife: the Japs had not given permission for this but they were not aware of it, and if any Jap guard happened to see a European woman in the camp he must have taken it for granted that her presence there was authorized. Later on she was sent to Changi Gaol with the rest of the civilian internees.

One day this senior medical officer called a conference of all the medical officers who were sharing the use of our M.I. room. There were certain medical comforts in the quartermaster's stores which were not sufficient for a general ration issue; he suggested that they should be kept in the M.I. room and distributed to deserving cases by medical officers. The comforts in question were Marmite, Bovril, chocolate, Ovaltine, cocoa, powdered milk, saccharine, and so forth.

I opposed this plan at once, and most of the M.O.s present agreed with me. We pointed out that there was nowhere in the M.I. room where these treasures could be safely locked away; also, the room was shared by several medical officers and their orderlies at different times, so that nobody could be there continuously to keep an eye on the stuff. I suggested that it should be kept at a special centre and issued to deserving cases on presentation of a signed chit from the medical officer in each case. The senior medical officer rejected my point of view entirely; I made it clear in a rather outspoken fashion that I would

take no responsibility for any medical comforts kept in the M.I. room.

So the stuff was moved in accordance with the great man's orders, and that very evening several items were being flogged around the various barrack blocks. An eight-ounce bottle of saccharine mixed with dirty water was selling for five dollars, a tablespoonful of powdered milk for one dollar and a teaspoonful of Marmite for two dollars.

I felt very angry about this: it was not merely a question of agreeable luxuries since some of these items were very important dietetically and could save life. So the next day I called on my high ranking colleague and, speaking quite frankly as one doctor to another, I told him just what I thought of his bright idea of putting these supplies in the M.I. room. He did not take my remarks in at all the right spirit; but the medical comforts, or what was left of them after one day's brisk trading, were recalled at once. Later on my own plan was started and worked very well, but as a result of speaking my mind I had become a marked man and my name was at the top of the list of those detailed to leave Changi in the next working party.

While I was still there, however, we were introduced to Jap brutality in a really conspicuous form: we were to see plenty of this later on, but in those early days it came as a shock. Three men belonging to the 9th Coast Regiment, R.A., escaped, put on civilian clothing and made their way to Singapore. This was a rash thing to do since there were Asians everywhere all too ready to ingratiate themselves with the Japanese by handing over any suspicious characters they found. These three were accused of being spies and sentenced to be shot; our authorities at Changi made every possible effort on their behalf, pointing out

that international law recognized the right of a prisoner to escape if he could, but the Japs would not listen.

It was not until evening on the day fixed for their execution that the three men were driven with Lt. Colonel Heath, the C.O. of their regiment, the Padre and their Battery Commander to a spot just outside the Changi perimeter wire, where graves had already been dug.

On arrival at the place of execution, the Colonel spoke shortly to each man; Capt. Griffith, their Battery Commander, took down their 'last messages' which were very short; the Padre said a prayer with each, and blessed them. All were steady and dignified. Then, their hands were tied behind their backs and they were made to kneel in front of their graves. The firing squad, which consisted of only three Japs, fired and the men fell. Afterwards three more shots were fired at close range, but the officers could not see how far these were strictly necessary; they only knew that with the light Japanese rifle, three immediate kills with three rounds could not be guaranteed.

It was a most harrowing experience for Colonel Heath and the other officers, and it upset everyone in the camp. Very strong representations were made to the Japs; they replied first that we were in no position to object, and secondly that since the men were in civilian clothes they must have been spies. This seemed to us very much a lawyers' argument; perhaps it struck the Japs in the same light, for later on everyone was made to sign a document promising not to attempt to escape on penalty of death by decapitation. The Japs may have felt it necessary, not only to deter us from escaping, but to provide some kind of documentary excuse for their tough and brutal policy.

We were already in Siam when we received these documents, but we heard from working parties newly

arrived from Singapore and Sumatra that the Allied command refused to issue these documents to the officers and men for signing. In Singapore all the P.O.W.s were immediately sent to Selarang Barracks, several thousand being crammed into one block designed to hold one hundred and twenty. The conditions were of course deplorable and men started to die; in order to prevent an epidemic our command had to give in to the Japs. So the documents were signed, but as each individual wrote his name he said, 'I sign under duress'. One officer in Sumatra bluntly told the Japs that by international law they could not compel any P.O.W. to sign such a document: he was immediately shot. When our turn came we realized that the Japs were in no mood for arguing on this subject and we signed at once muttering 'I sign under duress' as we did so. This mutter made the Jap officer who was witnessing the signatures very suspicious; it was explained to him that the words uttered were a prayer always spoken by Englishmen when signing important documents.

Early in April 1942 the Japs asked for three thousand P.O.W.s to form a working party; the senior members of the Changi Jack Club decided that this party should contain a large number of Volunteers, also a number of bad hats and trouble makers, and me, and the tiresome element generally, so that they could continue their carefree life untroubled. I was kept busy medically examining men who were to go on this party; by now most of the Volunteers were fairly keen to leave Changi, although a few still thought it beneath their dignity to be seen working in the streets of Singapore. One such Volunteer, a broker by trade, begged and implored me not to send him on the working party; I agreed, not

because he was ill or weak but because his behaviour disgusted me and I felt that a man of his type would only make trouble for us.

At last the day of departure came: the Japs gave the name of 'D' Battalion to a party of six hundred and fifty men (one company S.S.V.F., one company F.M.S.V.F., one company 2nd Gordon Highlanders, and one company from the 7th and 9th Coast Regiment, R.A.) and off we went on the fifteen-mile march from Changi to Havelock Road camp in Singapore.

This was a much greater ordeal than our march out to Changi on 21st February, for by now most of us had been on a semi-starvation diet for three months, aggravated by dysentery and beri-beri, and although we only had fifteen or twenty pounds of kit each, many of us found even that more than we could carry. Men started to collapse from sheer weakness quite soon after we had set out; the Japs saw this and allowed an occasional rest. One such rest took place where the Changi road forks towards the sea at Bedok corner. There were several Asian shops here, with bread and eggs and other foods for sale: this sight affected us very powerfully and soon a brisk trade was being done. I bought six duck eggs, a loaf of bread, and a bottle of Lee and Perrins Worcester sauce. I wasted no time in breaking the eggs into my drinking mug, adding a good shot of Worcester sauce, mixing it up well with my spoon and gulping it down. But unfortunately the shock was too much for my stomach and it all came up much quicker than it had gone down; even to this day I regret not having had a frying pan handy to catch the mixture and make a lovely omelette. But I was not the only one to suffer such a sudden reversal and loss.

These shopkeepers and the other Asians we now met on

the march were very friendly; things seemed to have changed a lot since we had marched to Changi. Many of them took considerable risks to give us water, food and even money, especially the Chinese, whose kindness and generosity made a lot of difference to our health in Havelock Road camp.

We arrived there in the late afternoon, tired out. There were actually two camps: 'D' Battalion went into Havelock Road camp, and another party who had come with us, to the adjacent River Valley Road camp.

I had seen these camps before the fall of Singapore. The huts were wooden, roofed with attap palm leaves; they had been built on waste land to house refugee Asians whose homes had been destroyed. By now their condition was deplorable; there were no latrines at all, washing and cooking facilities were totally inadequate, and the whole area had apparently been used by the local people as a refuse dump.

We were too tired to do anything about it that night and we slept wherever we could, scratching all night while the bugs, lice and fleas made merry. We never got completely rid of vermin during our whole stay here. One man died in the night; next morning we all set to work tidying the place up, although we could not do much about the overcrowding.

We had been brought to Singapore to clean up the city, demolish blast walls and to build big warehouses on a piece of waste land called the 'cabbage patch'; work there was not popular as there was no protection at all from the tropical sun. When we learned that the warehouses were intended to be occupied by Japanese troops, we made great efforts to collect bugs, lice and fleas and plant them there so as to amuse the occupants later on.

The new life was paradise compared with Changi: we were confined to the camps at night but during the day we went out on working parties around the city feeling wonderfully free. The food was not too bad and it was supplemented by a number of items bought outside or given to us by friendly Asians and then smuggled into the camps. At this stage the guards were satisfied if the number of P.O.W.s coming in seemed right; they did not bother much about the sacks which various individuals were carrying. The sick parades became the smallest I ever had throughout our captivity.

It was at these two camps that we Volunteers and many others really learned to adapt ourselves to the fact of being prisoners. We had to re-shape and re-direct our whole outlook: life became a game of make-believe and we acquired the knack of turning our attention entirely away from personal discomfort and deprivation. Together with a sense of humour this psychological technique saved morale and life as well. As a doctor I had many opportunities of studying the mental reactions of my fellow prisoners, and all too often I saw men failing to adapt themselves to this make-believe game, this mental camouflage of reality, and then in consequence becoming morose and gloomy and in the end invariably dying.

On the other hand, those who did master the knack became quite happy; a fact which may be hard to believe but is none the less true. Few of us could have survived on any other basis.

It gave me a peculiar feeling to find myself in the heart of the city again when our first working party was sent down to Raffles Place. There were not many local people about but there were a good many Japs walking about aimlessly, full of obvious pride in the success of their

armies. We got to work on the blast walls: the demolition of these was a good propaganda move, suggesting that the war was practically over and the British defeated once and for all, so that there was no further need of defence preparations.

Shopping was still possible; many of the shopkeepers, chiefly Indians and Chinese, sold us food well below market prices, and sometimes gave it to us. Others were hostile — from the fear of Jap punishment, I hoped, rather than from personal animosity.

Before long, and in spite of the fact that the Japanese were ready to inflict punishments ranging from a savage beating to decapitation upon anyone found helping us, a stream of food and other gifts was pouring into the camps, and various enterprising prisoners set up small shops beside their sleeping places. We Volunteers had the best local contacts and so we ran the best shops; the regular soldiers called us the Vultures, a name which stuck all through our captivity.

I told the Vultures that if they saw anything which looked at all like medicine when they were out on working parties it was to be spirited away by magic and brought back to me. Every evening I sorted out the medical loot and hid it away, knowing that a day would come when it would be of enormous value to all of us. They called me the King Vulture; some of them still do.

I suggested to the Japs that I should be appointed as official purchasing officer to visit the town and buy medicines. They were still warm with the pride of conquest and they agreed magnanimously, so once a week I went round the various chemists of Singapore buying up medicines and drugs, with a Japanese guard to look after me. Here again the Chinese were the most

helpful and the Sincere Dispensary in North Bridge Road deserves to be remembered in particular. I was after M. and B. 693 tablets, Vitamin B.₁ and B-complex, emetine and atebirin, and often I got them without paying: they saved many lives in the humid, disease-ridden jungles of Siam.

One evening I learned that the Vultures had been working in Coleman Street. Now I knew that a Eurasian doctor of my acquaintance had consulting rooms in Coleman Street, and I felt sure that he would help us. He and I had worked together during the bloody days before the capitulation; an experience of that kind cements friendship and I felt sure that I could rely upon him.

I set out for Coleman Street next morning with a list of the medicines which I hoped my friend would give us and also with two cheques, one for £11 drawn on my sterling account with Martins Bank at Liverpool and the other for \$100 on my account at the Mercantile Bank of India, Raffles Place, Singapore. The idea was that my friend should give me \$100 in cash, and then please himself which cheque to use in repayment.

Soon I spotted his surgery and when work started I asked the Jap guard if I could walk up Coleman Street and do some shopping. He grunted and nodded, and then followed slowly some little distance behind as I moved up the street, gazing into shop windows and feeling very hopeful. At the door of my friend's surgery I saw his office boy standing; he told me the doctor was at home, so I wasted no time, but glanced round quickly to make sure that my guard was walking slowly some distance away and then dashed up the stairs. There was my friend writing at his desk. I only had a few moments,

and my sudden appearance must have startled him. 'Look,' I said, 'we're in a bloody mess and urgently need vitamin B.₁, emetine and M. and B. 693 tablets, also could you cash me a cheque for \$100?'

He stared at me, muttering, 'I don't know, I don't know!' Then I heard the Jap guard's gruff voice downstairs, so I dashed away, bawling out 'Never mind, I'll write you a letter', and out I rushed into the street, explaining to the guard as he stumbled crossly after me that it was all a mistake, this was the wrong shop.

I felt sure that I was in for a good beating and thought I had better make my movements look more plausible, so I ran into the next shop and bought the first thing which caught my eye, which was a roll of toilet paper. The Jap guard burst out laughing to see me paying good money for bumf. I realized that that twenty-cent piece was my last coin. I walked along gloomily, repenting this wasteful purchase; my guard went on laughing happily while I brooded on what I would like to do with the paper.

I had placed great hopes on this plan, and so far nothing had come of it. That evening, back in the camp, I spoke to a fellow Vulture who was Eurasian by birth — a voluntary prisoner, therefore — and whose son used to come up to the barbed-wire fence at night to bring his father food and money and something else which we wanted even more urgently, namely news of the war. This officer suggested that if I wrote a letter to my doctor friend, it could be delivered by his son in the course of one of these very dangerous expeditions.

I wrote the letter, the boy took it, and the next day I heard that the doctor had not handed over any money or drugs, but had merely told the boy to come back next day for the answer. This was ominous: it smelt like a

trap. It was the kind of situation which interested the Kempei Tai or thought police, the Japanese equivalent of the N.K.V.D., and decapitation seemed a very probable fate for this young boy and for his father and myself as well.

The boy kept the appointment, which was brave of him. The doctor said he could do nothing to help, and said also that no further attempt must be made to contact him. He kept the cheques and my letter. A few days later we saw in a local paper that this same doctor had been appointed by the Japs as leader of the Eurasian community in Singapore. Even before the war he was sympathetically disposed towards the Japs, and when they came he welcomed them in the most wholehearted way. He was entitled, perhaps, to these political views, but in my opinion his behaviour was a major betrayal of a doctor's duty and of personal friendship as well.

We had other opportunities of observing how things had changed and how antagonisms previously latent had flared up. On one occasion I went with a working party to a certain hospital in Singapore which had been damaged and needed tidying up; I wandered about asking questions and I soon discovered that no Japanese doctors were working there. During the rest period at lunchtime, the Jap guard lay down and dozed and I had a chance to slip into the hospital in search of professional friends. I found them in a room very familiar to me since I had often been there before the capitulation: four Eurasian doctors, in conference perhaps or resting after their morning's work, sitting around with glasses of beer. I imagined myself being welcomed and offered a glass; but one of them who was apparently in charge said brusquely 'What do you want?' I explained that we were

very short of medicines and that I would be most grateful if they could let me have some vitamins and M. and B. 693 tablets.

He answered softly 'Well, well, well: look at the British begging. How the mighty are fallen!' then, softly: 'Get downstairs, quickly, before I call the Japs!'

I came away flushed with anger, cursing the turncoat bastards, with the echo of their high-pitched laughter still sounding in my ears like the jabbering and screeching of a pack of castrated monkeys.

People of this kind somehow seem to find it easy to dodge justice. About three months before the end of the war this particular doctor who spoke to me so politely saw the writing on the wall and he went with some colleagues to the Civilian Internees' Camp at Sime Road, Singapore, with large quantities of drugs and medicines. This noble generous gesture was taken at its face value by the internees, who were starving and ridden with disease and knew nothing of these men and their whole-hearted collaboration with the enemy. Then, when the war was over, these people got away scot free: perhaps because of holding some position in the community, or perhaps because of influence or political intrigue. Summary execution would have been more appropriate, and would have been more in keeping with the precedent established by the Japanese in 1942, when thousands of innocent Asians were liquidated for alleged collaboration with the British. Our own more generous policy was bitterly resented by the local people, many of whom had suffered more from the activities of their ambitious fellow-countrymen than from the Japanese themselves.

After episodes like these it was all the more pleasant to come across the opposite spirit at work. On one occasion

I was with a working party detailed to clean up the area around the Singapore Cold Store in Orchard Road, when I spotted my butcher presiding over his stall, number 60 in the market. In the old days it would have been beneath a white man's dignity, an impossible loss of face, to be seen buying meat at the market; but now I found it an interesting place, and it fascinated me to stroll between the stalls and see the various races in their brightly-coloured costumes, buying and selling the produce of the country and imported foodstuffs from neighbouring islands. There were tropical fruits: rambutan, mangosteens, persimmons, mangoes, papayas, and various varieties of bananas including the small smooth-skinned kind called pisang mas. Then there were fish: ikan merah, ikan puteh, ikan ledah, ikan sembilan and a wonderful choice of prawns, some of them still alive and of a transparent grey. When they died they would turn a dirty pinkish yellow colour quickly in the humid tropical heat and the wise buyer would then leave them alone. Big crabs too, with claws that could snap one's fingers off, still alive like the prawns and destined to be plunged into boiling water.

And so on to the meat section, with lovely fat pork on view from Changi of all places, that is to say, from a farm there; and then my friend of stall number 60, with his beautiful wares. They reminded me of dinner parties in a past which seemed very far away, when all the mems had commented upon the beauty of these juicy fillet steaks. And here I was, hungry and almost in rags, my stomach heaving with carnal desire until to my almost unsupportable joy Ah Yoke saw me, came up to me when the guard was not looking, seized my hand, and asked me with tears in his eyes how I was. Alas, I had lost weight, he said; and he had some of my favourite meat. 'But I have

no money, Ah Yoke.' 'Never mind, tuan; you have good dinner tonight—I will tell my friends, tuan, and before you go back to Camp I have plenty food ready for you.' He kept his word and we marched back to camp that afternoon carrying five small sacks of provisions, including some of my favourite fillet steaks, some Danish blue cheese, fresh vegetables, and various sorts of tinned food.

That night we feasted, myself and several fellow-Vultures; and we lay down blissfully to sleep, bloated like our own lice and bugs. The night should have been peaceful and happy, but was not; this sudden indulgence in rich food gave us the gripes and caused mad incessant stampedes for the latrine, where lovely rich protein and sorely needed vitamins, rushed forth as if chased by a thousand devils each playing a leaking bagpipe. All those who had shared in the feast contributed to the music of the night; but it had been a wonderful meal.

It was most comforting to have these evidences of Asian friendship. I have said before, but it cannot be said too often, that the Chinese were the best-disposed towards us: often when we were working near their homes they sent out their amahs with jugs of iced lemonade, and perhaps a sandwich or moon-cake to follow. We would wipe our dirty sweaty faces with equally dirty and sweaty forearms and the fresh cool drink would soothe our parched throats. Sometimes serene and peaceful old amahs would plough in amongst us like battleships, ignoring the curses of the Jap guards, and distribute food and drink to the prisoners; and we never really had an opportunity of saying how grateful we were, since such incidents had to be glossed over and made as inconspicuous as possible.

Even the Jap rations issued to us showed some improvement; and in consequence of all these things, the health of the P.O.W.s had improved enormously. The men looked fit and cheerful; this had one serious drawback, since now with more energy to spare everyone became more restive, more short-tempered: fights between individuals inside the camp became more and more frequent.

For some reason the British authorities in the camp did nothing to discourage these fights, by extra fatigues or other punishment, but seemed rather to encourage them: they would ask permission from the Japs for a 'blood fight'. Permission was always granted. In the evening, after working parties had returned to camp and after supper, the whole camp would turn out to see one European bash another, both of them bare-fisted, until the blood ran freely: eventually anger and resentment, the fruit of boredom and sexual starvation, dissipated themselves into bruised muscle and torn flesh, while hoards of Japanese officers and men stood by giggling like hysterical school girls. At last these fights were stopped after many repeated protests made by us doctors to our own authorities: we had to repair the bashed faces, and we could not afford stitches and dressings for such a purpose.

One day after lunch, not having gone out on a working party, I was dozing, when along came the camp interpreter with a Japanese staff-sergeant. This character had apparently started the hiccups some forty-eight hours before and could not stop; I knew him by sight, I remembered that he was in charge of the motor transport section, and I formulated a plan immediately and promised to cure him. Out came my stethoscope and I

examined him with a great deal of show and circumstance, and then I explained through Woodroffe Hill, the interpreter, that he would have to follow my instructions very carefully. I gave him a mouthful of water and warned him not to swallow it until I gave the signal; then I pressed hard with my finger tips over the inner part of his ears and told him to swallow.

When I took my fingers away the hiccups had gone. The Jap was delighted and brimming over with gratitude. Could he do anything in return to help me?

This was my chance: yes, he could do something for me. I explained to him that before the fighting started I had been in private practice in Singapore and that as the Japs had taken the city so quickly I had never had time to visit my house at 42 Scott's Road in order to collect some clothes. For this reason I had practically nothing to wear. As the sergeant was in charge of the lorries, would he therefore take me to my house to see if I could remedy this? The Jap bowed effusively; he was only too happy to do it, he would pick me up the following afternoon at three, bringing Woodroffe Hill to act as interpreter.

I could hardly believe my good fortune. Just to make sure, I wrote a letter which could be passed in to my man Sussie if after all I failed to get into the house and if he were still there. This letter was just to let Sussie know that I was a P.O.W. at Havelock Road Camp and would like a few items of clothing.

The next day the Jap sergeant and Woodroffe Hill turned up as arranged and soon we were speeding along River Valley Road and Patterson Hill, then across Orchard Road and into Scott's Road. I felt my heart pounding at the thought of seeing my old home again and perhaps meeting Sussie. When we turned into the

drive I saw a wooden sign there with Japanese writing on it: this rather frightened the sergeant, but it was too late now to turn back, since just across the road stood a Jap sentry guarding what was obviously a big-shot's residence. This sentry saluted my sergeant respectfully, but he seemed uncommonly interested in our activities.

I had been afraid that we would not find Sussie at home, and we did not, but his daughter appeared from the servants' quarters. When she saw me she burst out wailing and weeping 'Oh master! Oh master! We thought you were dead!' I felt flattered at a display of so much emotion on my behalf. After a while the girl sorted herself out and then explained to me that the house was occupied by a Japanese officer and his Chinese girl friend, and that the Japanese officer had given strict instructions that nothing was to be taken from the house as it was enemy property. Sussie had apparently taken on a new job in Burma Road, Singapore.

Pictures thronged into my memory while she spoke: happy days spent in the house, my friend Peter Ellis and myself sitting back of an evening on the cool verandah, pouring back our stengahs, or taking pot-shots at the chichaks on the ceiling with an ear syringe full of water, the great game being to get a chichak right over your head before shooting, so that the unfortunate creature fell on you. I remembered the Saturday when, during lunch, I ran out madly with my walking stick after a black cobra, which disappeared, so that Peter accused me of drinking too much beer. I remembered the next Saturday too, when I saw the snake again at the same time, and we caught it and killed it with boiling water; it was 5 feet 6 inches long, and Peter never accused me again of drinking too much beer.

Remembering these and a thousand other episodes of the carefree past that had gone, I stood a prisoner before my own house.

I pulled myself together and handed to the girl the note which I had written for Sussie, explaining to the Jap what I was doing: he agreed to bring me back the next day at the same time. But this second appointment he did not keep: perhaps he was unable to get away, or perhaps he was worried about the Jap officer who lived opposite my house.

I was very depressed and angry about this. Two days later I met the staff-sergeant; he pretended not to have seen me, but I threw discretion to the winds and ran up to him and started to wave my hands about and gesticulate and carry on generally, as the Japs do when angry. 'You no gentleman,' I bawled, 'Englander say he do something, he do; you promise take me my house, now you no take me. No good, you no gentleman!' The sergeant flushed and I got ready for an explosion, but to my surprise he sucked air in through his protruding teeth and bowed his head in shame and shambled away. I knew that my bullying had succeeded and that he would collect the things from Sussie; and sure enough a Jap soldier came to my hut that very same evening with a pillowcase full of my clothes, so that I became at least for a short time the very model of a well-dressed man about prison-camp.

The next day it was my turn to accompany a working party bound for the Singapore Harbour Board. I liked visiting the docks, which encouraged wonderful daydreams of going away; on this occasion our dreams were spoilt by the sight of a man's head stuck up on a pole and smothered in flies, complete with a notice in English and in various native languages as well saying why this head

had parted company with its shoulders. We counted seven such heads that day in various parts of the city: the crimes appeared to be in most cases 'collaboration with the English' and sometimes stealing. This reminded us that we were dealing with savages; the local population were very much impressed, as well they might be, and kept off the streets for some time, but the Chinese continued to help us whenever they could.

In the same way, the Asian population tended always to keep clear of Stamford Road, since the Japanese had established in the Y.M.C.A. there the headquarters of their thought police, the Kempei Tai. Here modern science joined hands with ancient oriental practices, and the business of making prisoners talk was brought to a hideously fine art: the screams from inside the Y.M.C.A. building were often audible over the noise of the traffic.

Those of us who went out on working parties soon discovered that of the various jobs available, some were much more attractive than others. The sawmill at Kota Tinggi was always very popular. The task here was to bring back timber for various constructional purposes which the Japs had in hand.

The Kota Tinggi working party would leave camp in the early morning in a convoy of twenty or thirty lorries. The first time I went with this party I was able to see the spot where the Japs had first landed on Singapore Island, and also the damage — now repaired in a ramshackle fashion — which our retreating troops had done to the Johore Causeway.

No Japanese officer came on these convoys and the atmosphere was rather like that of a school treat: we drove happily out of Singapore and into the open country, through native villages where the guards would

sometimes stop the convoy and go off for a while to the local coffee shop while we did a brisk trade with the local shopkeepers, buying food and drink and listening with much pleasure to their estimates of the Japanese character.

When we arrived at the sawmill we had to load the lorries with planks; this never took very long, and afterwards we ate our picnic lunch and then helped ourselves to pineapples from a local plantation. We filled sack after sack, the Jap guards usually turning a blind eye; the fruit was delicious and made a very welcome addition to the diet, especially of those in hospital.

Life in the camp was altogether pleasant, at least compared to Changi. One drawback, from my point of view, was the sleeping space, six feet square and high above the ground, which I had to share with two other medical officers. These two hated each other's guts. I was placed in the middle as a kind of neutral zone or buffer state; they had a habit of over-lapping on to my territory, until one day I nailed up strips of wood to mark my boundary.

One of these doctors, a regular officer in the R.A.M.C., had been in the Far East for a good many years. He was an ardent yogi. Sometimes he used to stand on his head for two or three hours at a time on his part of the platform, and then for a change wave his sweaty feet about in the air over my estate. This was rather disagreeable for me, especially since he always appeared to be on the point of tumbling on top of me; so I used to pepper him gently, to make his head-squatting end suddenly with a thunderous sneeze. At other times he would sit for long periods cross-legged and with a far-away look in his eyes.

The other officer was obviously a foundation member of the Jack Club. He had two field medical panniers, marked with the red cross but full of bully beef, pilchards, jam, Marmite, condensed milk, Bronco and so on; it should of course have been handed in to the Q.M.S. when we first went into Changi. He was the most selfish person I have ever met. One of his favourite games was to sit down and guzzle a tin of pilchards, every now and again remarking 'I say, Pav, old boy, just look at this delicious fish!' I was hungry, and this always made me lose my temper.

The most pleasant part of the day was the evening. We washed away the sweat and dust of the day's work and had something to eat, and then we sat around the huts discussing the day's events and the various contacts we had made among friendly Asians. Also, we had the war news to discuss, though only a few of us knew where our up-to-date information was coming from. A Gordon Highlander had smuggled a wireless set into the camp under his kilt; it was a great pleasure to us to hear friendly voices coming over the air from London. At this time we had a portable transmitter as well, and various attempts were made to get into touch with India. But this never succeeded, and before long we heard that the Japanese were aware of the transmissions and had traced them to our neighbourhood; in the circumstances, and since after all the transmitter was serving no useful purpose, we decided to get rid of it. Later on the receiver was destroyed as well, since the consequences of the Japs finding it would have been very serious.

It was tantalizing to realize how freely wireless waves, and aircraft as well, could go spinning round the world while we were in captivity. At about this time working

parties were detailed to extend Kallang Aerodrome: they completely flattened a hill in order to provide the earth for this purpose. We soon realized that various Japanese aircraft were parked quite near the spot where this earth was being unloaded. Two R.A.F. officers made a very close study of the area and discovered that the planes were unguarded. So they worked out a daring escape plan. They were to hide near the aircraft when the last lorry-loads of earth were dumped in the late afternoon and then during the night they were going to take one of the planes and escape to India. We made lists for them to take and hand over to the authorities in India, the names of all those known to be in prison, also of all those who had been killed in the fighting for Singapore or had died afterwards.

The plan was a risky one, since it depended upon the absence of these two officers passing unnoticed at the evening roll-call. Luckily, in these early days the Japs did not take roll-call very seriously; often when a man was absent it was quite sufficient for the rest of us to shout 'Benjo!', meaning latrine. Even so, on the night chosen for this escape the few of us who knew about it could not sleep; we lay awake anxiously listening for the sudden noise of a single aircraft. The morning came and we had heard nothing: we concluded gloomily that our friends had been captured, but when the first lorries arrived in the morning to dump earth they both appeared unobtrusively and joined the working party. We learned later that they had managed to get inside the plane, in fact they had gone from one machine to another, but had been quite unable to start the engines. It was a tantalizing experience for them: and presumably the Japs had heard of the matter somehow, since afterwards the aircraft were

guarded and we were kept very well away from them.

For some while men had been reporting sick, complaining of an unbearable itch in the scrotum: this distressing complaint got worse and worse and spread all over the camp. At first we doctors thought, mistakenly, that some kind of fungus infection like that responsible for Dhobie's Itch was the cause of what in clinical terminology we called Red Balls. We tried every sort of treatment: Whitfield's ointment, tincture of iodine, Vlemick's solution, each one guaranteed to make the recipient do a spectacular war-dance. It was a grand unforgettable sight during the evening sick parades to see five hundred or a thousand naked P.O.W.s leaping up and down and fanning their balls after receiving the treatment. The whole camp, including the Japs, used to turn out to see the show. But the tables were turned, and the Jap guards themselves started to get the disease: one of them, a Korean, came and asked for the treatment and earned the nickname Red-Balls, which stuck to him throughout our captivity: more about him later.

Eventually we realized that this trouble was a form of scrotal dermatitis due to vitamin deficiency: from time to time throughout our P.O.W. life we suffered epidemics of it which often took a serious turn, involving diphtheria and even death in many cases.

At long last, it became apparent that our days at Havelock Road were numbered. Rumours and speculations circulated for a long time previously, the nicest theory being that we were bound for Cameron Highlands, one of the finest hill stations in Malaya, nearly six thousand feet above sea level not far from Ipoh. We were going to grow vegetables there to supply both Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, where the Japs maintained

large numbers of men. This rumour sounded too good to be true, and was.

A few days before we were to leave Singapore the Japs issued American Red Cross parcels: these were the first to arrive in Singapore, and during the whole of our captivity we only received one further issue, in Siam. On both occasions it worked out at two parcels per twenty-six men. Since our men handled the parcels we were perfectly well aware of the fact that the Japanese kept the bulk of these parcels for themselves, including most of the medical comforts; but they did hand over a fair supply of medicines to Roberts Hospital at Changi for distribution to the various units.

When we heard about this we immediately applied to our administration at Changi for a share of these medicines: we would certainly need them if we were really going to move up country. The authorities refused this application on the grounds that we could meet our needs by means of local purchases, over-looking the fact that drugs were expensive and that the men had already contributed a good deal of their daily ten cents' pay for the purpose. Furthermore, Changi explained optimistically that the Japanese had given a promise to the effect that adequate hospitals and medicines would be available at our destination. When it came to the point, however, everybody contributed generously, local chemists made us presents, and the Vultures had their own well-known methods of acquiring things; so in spite of the meanness of the authorities, 'D' Battalion went up country better provided medically than most other parties.

The move took place on 12th October, 1942: we had to be ready to move long before it was in fact necessary, but eventually at two in the afternoon we marched out of

Havelock Road camp for the last time with our belongings on our backs, heading for the station. Our burdens were heavy and the tropical sun was terrible: but before long some of the local people were helping us once again, carrying our luggage for us on their own backs or in rickshaws and without payment. Others stood by waving to us as we went; we had received any number of parting gifts — food, money, medicines.

We must have looked a pretty queer crowd, dressed in a motley collection of rags. Now that the time had come we were glad to be on the move, and once again glad to see that we had so many friends among the local people.

Chapter Three

ONCE again we were on our way north, and in circumstances contrasting oddly with my leisurely journey from Singapore to Bedong the previous autumn, when I had been a carefree and successful young doctor with a peace-time world at my feet.

Now, instead of my own car, it was cattle trucks. These were 7 feet wide and 18 feet long, and the Japs pushed thirty-two of us into each one of them. The heat inside was unbearable, and only with very great difficulty could we persuade the Japs not to close the doors and make things much worse. They were very suspicious and took a roll-call every time the train stopped, day or night.

The night came on but sleep was quite impossible: it was too hot, the train jolted madly, and there was no room to lie down. No sanitary arrangements at all had been made, and we had to take it in turns to lean backwards out of the open door, friends holding our arms, as the train rattled and shook its way through the tropical night. This gymnastic performance at least broke up the monotony of the night: many of us, less grievously afflicted with P.O.W. diarrhoea, preferred to wait until the train stopped, but found that this involved performing before the interested eyes of the local people, gathered together to see the P.O.W. train and the white prisoners.

This happened at our first stop, at Seremban on the way

to Kuala Lumpur: we arrived there about thirteen hours after leaving Singapore. After only half an hour's rest the train moved on, and the same thing happened when we arrived at Kuala Lumpur soon after dark. The Japanese missed no chance of exposing us to ridicule in front of the local people.

At Kuala Lumpur they gave us each a cup of boiled rice, which was our first meal since leaving Singapore the previous afternoon. We ate it on the station platform, looking across at the local hotel, which many of us knew very well, and wishing we could slip in for a quick cool beer.

About an hour later we were on the move once again, and this time we got ourselves more organized. We piled all the luggage in a corner of the truck and arranged space so that eight men could lie down at a time, feet to face, and get a few hours' sleep. The rest of us, waiting our turn, had to sit elsewhere, very close together and in great discomfort. Eventually my turn came to stretch out and sleep: this was very pleasant indeed, but there are at least two drawbacks to sleeping feet to face like sardines in a tin. One is that feet smell: the other is illustrated by the fact that during my sleeping session my big toe accidentally found its way into the mouth of a fellow-Vulture Cecil Bovine, who bit it sharply. I woke up and expressed my injured feelings in hideous rowdy language, people took sides and there was nearly a fight.

Next morning we arrived at Prai, which is opposite the island of Penang. In the distance we could see the island and even the roof of the railway station there: a unique railway station, for although it has waiting rooms, booking office, newspaper stalls, and so forth, it has never seen a train. You book your ticket there and leave

by the railway ferry for Prai. The island is very beautiful, and the sight of it filled us with sadness and regret.

We spent several hours at Prai, which gave us a chance to stretch our legs and chat with the locals, who seemed friendly. Here at last we discovered where we were going: a railway porter came along sticking labels on to the trucks, saying 'Bang Pong'. We gossiped around and discovered that this place was in Siam and that the Japs had already taken a great deal of railway equipment there: rails, sleepers, and so forth. Apparently they meant to build a railway from Siam to Burma in order to help them in the fighting against the British there. Those of us who knew about Siam became very gloomy at this news: this railway would inevitably have to pass through enormous tracts of virgin jungle, and this meant malaria and possibly blackwater fever as well.

Before we left Prai the Japs issued us with another cup of plain boiled rice; they had made no arrangements to feed us, and we had no more food to speak of during the whole journey to Bang Pong. Sick parades were almost impossible on the journey, as the train only stopped for a few minutes every now and again. On these occasions I often had to visit some sick man in another truck, and once I nearly got left behind. We had practically no water, but occasionally the engine driver would let us have some from the engine: it came out as superheated steam and tasted unpleasant but at least it was safe for drinking.

Eventually on the morning of 17th October, five days after leaving Singapore, the train arrived at Bang Pong. A Japanese colonel was at the station to greet us; his name was Ishii, and he stood on a soap box and welcomed us to Thailand, which was the new name the country had

been given by the Japanese and the Nationalist Siamese. Colonel Ishii spoke grandly about the Spirit of Bushido — a benevolent god of some kind apparently, later known among our troops as the Spirit of Bullshitto but always rather elusive and unhelpful, as the Colonel himself discovered during the 1947 war crimes trials in Singapore.

When this pep-talk was over we went off to a nearby camp, which was in a paddy field: it was the rainy season and everything was completely under water. As we went in at the gates we saw a Siamese, tied to a stake, near the Jap guardhouse, being savagely beaten with a heavy bamboo cane by one of the guards. Waiting in the tree tops were a number of hungry-looking vultures: they stayed with us with angry fiery eyes, watching and waiting, for the next three years: to avoid confusion we classified them as the 2nd Battalion of the Vultures.

There were bamboo platforms in our huts as well as in the so-called camp hospital, so that it was possible to lie about a foot above the water level. The huts were infested with bugs and lice and the stagnant water below was full of mosquito larvae: we slept that night the sleep of utter exhaustion, too far gone to notice the attentions paid to us by all these visitors. Two weeks later, in consequence, almost all of us went down with malaria.

Even now we had not arrived at our final destination. We were to leave this camp and march to a place called Tarsau, sixty-five miles away. I held a sick parade and decided to leave twenty of the worst cases in the very crowded camp hospital, making arrangements for them to be looked after and leaving a supply of drugs.

Before daybreak next morning we were dragged to our feet again and formed up for the gruelling march ahead of

us, parading with all our luggage on our backs. I broke up our supplies of medicine and supplementary foods into tiny parcels, each not weighing more than one pound, and distributed them among men who volunteered to carry them: an extra pound on your back may not sound very much, but after several hours' barefoot march in the tropical sun it is heavy. The men must have felt the temptation to throw the drugs away or eat the foods, but the whole lot was handed back to me intact when we arrived. Later parties made the mistake of leaving their medical equipment to be sent up to them afterwards by the kindly Japanese: of course they were never seen again, and we had to stretch our own supplies even further in consequence. As we left the camp we heard a revolver shot, the last stage in the punishment of the Siamese whom we had seen the evening before. His offence may have been anything — stealing, collaboration, rudeness: the Japs were very touchy.

This march was our first long one since arriving at Havelock Road Camp, and it took us two days to cover the first forty miles, which brought us to a place called Kamburi. The going was hard, and before long the men were discarding unnecessary luggage: when you are in prison and without possessions, you tend to hoard any useless junk that comes your way, and now as we trudged along the hard ground bathed in perspiration we parted sadly with any number of bits of wire, empty tins, old nails, and other things which we had once thought might come in useful. Blisters formed on the men's heels, so that they had to take their boots off and walk barefoot on the hot road; lack of salt and excessive sweating led to severe abdominal cramps, and some found it necessary to

walk doubled up so as to relieve the pain slightly. I marched up and down the column, encouraging the men along, but I had to tell many of them to fall out and rest by the roadside, since to march would have meant for them collapse and death in a very short time.

But before long a car turned up and in it was Colonel Ishii. The Spirit of Bushido was working on my behalf that day: the Colonel saw my red cross armlet and stopped to ask if I was the doctor; when I told him that I was, he invited me to ride in his car. This was astounding: I could only conclude that there must have been an accident somewhere, and I climbed into the car wearily, thinking of more work and more responsibility. But the Colonel offered me a cigarette and we sped on far ahead of the marching column to a place called Tamuang, where we drove in at the gate of a Japanese camp, the guards springing smartly to attention and saluting the car. Ishii took me along to his hut and told me to sit on the floor and take my shoes off, and then asked me if I would like to go for a bath. I wondered whether he had gone mad, or whether I myself was dreaming, but it actually happened: an orderly brought two four-gallon kerosene tins full of hot water, and gave me soap and a towel. This was my first hot bath since before the fall of Singapore, and the only sad thing about it was that afterwards I had to put my damp, sweaty, verminous old garments on again.

I came back to Ishii's hut when I had had my bath and was given a very comforting lunch: rice, together with a liberal helping of Japanese officers' stew, which was made of chicken, edible seaweed, vegetables and brewer's yeast — a most tasty concoction. Also there were grilled salt fish, and bananas and coffee to finish off with: the salt fish were especially welcome.

Over the coffee we talked. Ishii said he was going to send me back in a lorry to pick up the men who had fallen out. He was very interested to hear that I had practised medicine in Singapore, and he said that after the war he intended to visit Singapore and afterwards London: both places, he thought, would be worth seeing. I could not help wondering which of us was more likely to see either of those cities.

The lorry came and I was taken back down the road towards the marching column. A great many villagers had turned out to see the prisoners, and here again local people seemed to have little love for the Japanese and were very ready to show friendship towards us.

At last in the distance I heard the noise of the pipes: there were the men, the Highlanders leading them and astonishing the natives with their sad wild music. Backwards and forwards went the lorry, picking up the stragglers until the whole weary and footsore Battalion had been brought into camp. That night Pinky Riley and I worked into the small hours incising blisters and dressing sore and bleeding feet; afterwards we were too tired to sleep.

And at six in the morning, up again and off again on the second day's forced march. Kamburi was still twenty miles away and they were longer, harder miles than yesterday's. Many of the men had to walk barefoot, as they could not pull their boots on over the raw blisters which I had incised during the night; all of us were stiff and aching all over. But before long things eased a little; our muscles gradually loosened, the men started to talk, some of the stouter ones sang, and once again I could hear the pipes. It was still cool and the column marched in an orderly way with no stragglers. The relief was only

temporary; as the day advanced and the sun rose high our bodies started sweating, and the abdominal and muscular cramps due to thirst and lack of salt attacked us more and more frequently and more and more unendurably. The conversation and the song died away, and soon even the pipes were silent; men saved their breath for the painful struggle along the never-ending road. They marched with shoulders bent forward to relieve the weight they carried and to ease the cramps in their bellies, and with their heads lowered too, so as to see only the little piece of ground immediately ahead. To look up and to see the miles upon miles that still had to be covered made one despair.

So we struggled on with bent shoulders and heads thrust down, trying desperately to ignore the pain in our exhausted bodies, thinking with all the will power we had of other things, daydreaming of the past: few of us then had the courage to think of the future.

Our thoughts became like dope to an addict. I wiped the sweat from my brow and sucked my dirty sweaty arm with parched lips, deriving momentary satisfaction from the salty sweat; and meanwhile in my mind were a thousand fantasies, lovely girls, meals, wine waiters ready to fetch and carry for me; my student rooms in Edinburgh and a round of MacEwan's Special with old friends; and then I stumbled forward filled with new and more sickening pain as the Jap guard crashed his rifle butt against my backside to hurry me along. Ahead the road still dwindled to a distant point: God, how much longer? And then the road would start to swing around and rise up in front of my eyes, so that I had to reel and stumble, staggering and lurching along to dodge and follow this mad treacherous road that went on for ever.

At last, unbelievably, there was only 100 yards to go, then 50, then 20, then down we crashed on to the dusty ground, lying on our backs as if crucified, our hearts leaping and pounding as if trying to escape from our heaving chests. Eventually an idea butted its way dully into my head: I had to open up the blisters on the men's feet. I staggered up, blind and stupid, looking for Pinky Riley; under a tree I opened my little raw-hide attaché case and out came my rusty scissors and my dissecting forceps. The men lay still, being long past pain, while I punctured the bulging blisters and cut away the loose flaps of sodden skin and Pinky put on sulphanilamide powder and adhesive dressings. Again, I worked far into the night, supported and endlessly comforted by the helpful consideration I always got: 'Here, sir, have a cup of tea!' — hot muddy water with a fine suspension of sand in it — or 'Sir, here's some hot water and a wee bit soap I stole from the Japs; come, sir, I'll scrub your back.' And so I was able to relax in the end and allow myself to sink under the waves of exhaustion.

Kamburi turned out to be a fairly big place, built on a plateau and surrounded by hills. The camp was a large one, and there were many Japanese troops stationed nearby; our huts were of the usual bamboo and palm-leaf construction and contained the usual battalions of bugs, lice and fleas. The day after we got there the Jap Commandant told us that the next morning we would have to march again, so Major Clark, S.S.V.F., the officer commanding 'D' Battalion, went with me to his hut and together we told him that if the men had indeed to be on the march again, so soon, at least two hundred and fifty would have to be left behind, being totally incapable of walking. His reply to this was an explosive and hysterical

scream, and for good measure he slapped us both in the face. So I went up and spoke more plainly and decisively to him insisting that if any deaths occurred among my men he would have to accept responsibility; there had been one death due to exhaustion in the previous party, and as a doctor I had completed my duties by warning him of the men's condition.

This rash truculence on my part seemed to work: I got another slap in the face, but immediately afterwards a cup of coffee and a cigarette and we were told we could have another day's rest. So I pushed my advantage home and asked him to let me go into the town with a guard to buy medicines and dressings. He agreed at once; by now it was become increasingly clear that by standing up to the Japs, even at the cost of a beating, one could very often get one's way. To give in to them meant anything from a slap in the face to a kick in the crutch. Sometimes it was possible to chose one's posture carefully and then by a well-timed yell lead the Jap to suppose he had scored a direct hit when in fact he had not. You had to be quick to get away with this.

In view of the enormous strain we had all been living under I decided to hold a complete medical inspection all round. I found the chief complaint to be tightness of the chest and difficulty in breathing. On listening to their hearts, I detected many missed beats, and in most cases the pulse rate was fast. I decided that one hundred and fifty men were still unable to march even allowing for the extra day's rest. When I passed on this information to the Jap Commandant he made me stand at attention in the blazing sun just outside his hut for a whole hour. When this began to pall I reminded him that he had promised to let me go into town to buy medicines that after-

noon, and he sent for a guard and packed me off at once.

I had told the men that morning while I was holding my sick parade that I was going into the town to buy medicines, and I asked for voluntary offerings of cash; they responded wonderfully, so now I was able to step out along the dusty road to the town with my Jap guard, carrying quite a large sum in Malayan dollars and hoping that the Siamese would find these acceptable. There was no difficulty about this and the shops were well stocked, so I was able to buy a considerable quantity of medicines, mostly of British origin.

My guard seemed a decent little fellow and he had made conspiratorial signs to me on the way to indicate his intention of buying himself a few beers. When we came out of the chemist a well-dressed Siamese was standing by the door of a shop; he called us over and spoke in his own language to my little guard, who grinned broadly, and we were then invited into the shop and taken into a back room and plied with beer. This was very agreeable, but before long I was more interested in the man himself than in his liquor. His name was Boon Phong; he asked me if I knew which camp we were going to, and when I said that according to rumour we were going up river to a place called Tarsau he said that the Japs had their headquarters for the railway construction project there, and that we would be sent on to clear the jungle and prepare for the laying of the track. He asked me a great many searching questions and took my name down very carefully, my Japanese guard meanwhile paying no attention at all to this conversation, being fully occupied with beer and a pretty Siamese girl. Finally Boon Phong asked me for a list of the medicines we

would be needing most urgently in future and said that he would bring me supplies of them in the course of his extensive trading by motor boat up and down the river. This was a heartening episode, but when I got back to camp and discussed it, some of us felt a certain disquietude: Boon Phong was an enigmatic figure and he seemed to know far too much.

We left Kamburi early next morning, refreshed by our day's rest. The hundred and fifty men who were sick stayed behind and were later brought up by river barges, and joined us at a place called Wampo.

Now the going was really heavy rather than hard, through flooded paddy fields and along narrow jungle tracks. Sometimes the Jap guards lost their way, and then we had to retrace our steps. Drinking water was still a problem; we were in virgin jungle, marching away from the river, and pools of water seemed few and far between. When we did find them they were filthy dirty and alive with mosquito larvae: we had to filter the water as well as we could through grubby old handkerchiefs. Even in broad daylight mosquitoes in millions came queueing up for a taste of European blood, and later on the jungle track led us through swampy marshland and the leeches had their turn, attaching themselves to our bare legs and sucking blood until they looked like black slimy bloated marbles; then we could pull them off, leaving a smear of blood.

Eventually we left the thick jungle behind and came out on to cultivated land and arrived at the village of Rajah, where there was a big Buddhist temple. The atmosphere here was quiet, holy and peaceful; the priests, shaven-headed and very dignified in their saffron robes, were very friendly and considerate to us and allowed us to

sleep in and around the temple. The Japanese had made no provision at all for feeding us, but these priests gave us some uncooked rice, which we boiled up by the riverside: this was our first meal since we had set out that morning.

The number of men reporting sick with blistered feet was as large as ever. The Jap in charge at Rajah seemed a reasonable man and he agreed that we could rest the following day; as before, I explained that without this respite very few of us would arrive at Tarsau alive. The men were able to bathe in the muddy but cool and refreshing waters of the river. This bathe, their first since Singapore, and a restful day in peaceful surroundings, improved everybody's morale considerably.

Only seven men failed to set off with us next morning. We all felt better: we no longer complained of aching muscles and our feet had become hardened to long marching. The going varied; sometimes it was thick jungle and sometimes we followed bullock tracks which the heavy rains had made into rivers of mud, so that we had to wade up to our knees in sticky slime. Our destination that day was a place called Tardan, and in general our spirits remained high until, late in the afternoon and with only a short distance still to go, we had to cross the river. A Japanese officer came to meet us carrying a heavy bamboo stick, which he used freely to herd us, forty at a time, into barges. The rains had been torrential and the river was swollen. As soon as a sufficient number of us had been beaten into a barge, it was let go and the fast current carried it at once to the middle of the river; from there it was manoeuvred across to the other side with long poles, and we disembarked about a quarter of a mile down stream. Then the barge was towed half a mile

up stream and allowed to drift down again until it was caught from the far side so that another load could be got on board. Several barges were used continually in this rather haphazard fashion until we were all safely across, which was a relief: previous parties had been less fortunate, as the barges were liable to overturn.

We camped for the night in a rough clearing by the riverside; there was no cover of any kind, it rained all night, there were no latrines, and the ground had been lavishly fouled by previous parties. The Japs were very jumpy and made us light enormous fires to keep wild animals away: they were always liable to see man-eating tigers and mad bull elephants in every bush, and the slightest jungle noise made them leap to their feet, rifle in hand.

Some uncooked rice was handed out to us and we boiled it with dirty water taken from the river: we were too hungry to turn up our noses at the resulting brown mixture of rice, mud and sand. In the drenching rain sleep was almost impossible, and we were not sorry when a misty dawn broke through and we were marshalled for the last lap of our journey to Tarsau. Now the going was very heavy and our kit was soaking wet and therefore much heavier; for two weary hours the Jap guards led us along the wrong track, and we had to retrace our steps. At noon the column was halted and we lay down on the wet ground and slept for three hours while the Japanese cooked and ate a large number of chickens. We were given no food. We set off at three and arrived at Tarsau at ten o'clock: our exhaustion and the oppressive darkness of the jungle made the place seem ghostly and unreal; dwarfed among enormous jungle trees we found our bamboo huts, but no arrangements had been made to feed us, and our cooks were kept busy till two in the

morning boiling up some rice which the Japanese after much delay and very reluctantly handed over to us.

I have already explained that Tarsau was the headquarters of the organization created by the Japanese for the purpose of building the Siam railway. There were already a great many P.O.W.s there, and from time to time parties were sent out to different places in the jungle in order to build camps, where the men could live who were going to cut away the jungle and build embankments and make everything ready for the actual laying of the track. We stayed at Tarsau three days, while the Japs decided what to do with us: we were kept busy meanwhile building more huts, and I tried to catch up with my medical work: the blisters and the scratches of our long march had in many cases developed into large tropical ulcers, and I had plenty to do. Morale improved a little; for one thing we met a great many old friends.

On the third day we were sent about thirty miles down the river in barges to set up a camp at a place called Wampo. The barges were towed by a motor boat of a kind known to the Siamese as a pom-pom, on account of the noise made by its single cylinder: when we were well on our way the engine stopped, either to save fuel or else perhaps because of a break-down, and we drifted silently on the strong current. The river scenery was almost unbelievably beautiful: thick vegetation came right down to the water's edge, variegated here and there by enormous bamboo trees, and the silent vastness of the blue sky filled us with awe. Sometimes the silence would be shattered by a sudden screeching of parrots and jabbering of monkeys: we felt like intruders into a strange world, gorgeous but untamed.

Eventually the pom-pom started up again and guided us towards a mooring post by the river bank: we saw a muddy path leading up to what would be a gently sloping plateau if only the jungle were cut down, and this was our first task.

Already the Japs had cleared a small area and built a large hut for themselves and two smaller ones which seemed empty. Some of us slept in these, but the majority in the open air. Meanwhile we had to start on the work of clearance: they set us working the moment we were on dry land. It was quite heavy work since many of the trees around there were quite large and there were numerous clumps of giant bamboo, not to mention the thick tangle of smaller vegetation. Some of the men hacked away at the jungle, others removed and burnt what they had cut down. This preliminary clearance went on next day, and until we got the ground clear of bamboo stumps we were constantly hearing agonized bellows from those who trod carelessly among them in the dark, and suffered fearsome splinters or the loss of toe nails.

We now learned that our share in the work of constructing this railway was to build a section of line some twelve miles long, with a viaduct at one end and a bridge at the other. We called the viaduct Wampo South and the bridge Wampo North, while our headquarters at Wampo Central lay in between.

More men arrived and before long there were fifteen hundred at Wampo, made up as follows.

‘D’ Battalion: O/C Major Clark, S.S.V.F.

M.O. Captain Pavillard, S.S.V.F.

‘B’ Battalion: O/C Lt.-Col. Lilly, Sherwood
Foresters

M.O. Captain Richardson, R.A.M.C.

'F' Battalion: O/C Major Brodie.

M.O. Major Bennett, R.A.M.C.

We were fed very badly at Wampo. The amount of plain boiled rice which we were given three times a day was quite inadequate: three men's rations would not have filled one of us. The Japanese issued no tea or sugar, and worse still, no salt, and we used to feel almost unendurable cravings for anything with a sweet or salty flavour. This diet meant that we lived continually under the immediate threat of the various incapacitating and dangerous diseases which are caused by vitamin deficiency; our resistance was very low, and we were easy meat for any infection that was going around. We also suffered from chronically low blood pressure, the result of a rice diet and salt deficiency, and for this reason we were liable to suffer distressing blackouts if we lifted our heads quickly or turned from side to side.

The number of sick men at Wampo increased rapidly, and we persuaded the Japanese to let us have two tents, into which we packed fifty of our worst cases to protect them from the tropical sun and the tempestuous rain. The Japanese took most of the fit men to work on jungle clearance, and our programme of hut construction progressed very slowly.

On our way to Tarsau we had been exposed to mosquito-bites in a big way, and now malaria became almost universal. I asked the Japs for quinine, and they gave me some, but not nearly enough: three three-grain tablets per day for each man, for a total of five days. This was nothing like enough to cure those who had the disease, and no quinine at all was issued for prophylactic purposes. It became necessary for me to falsify my returns and to show the number of malarial cases as

higher than it was in fact. This was made easier for me because the Japanese refused to admit that there was such a thing as dysentery among us; so in my lists I put all these cases down as malaria, and added twenty-five per cent for good measure. The important thing was to take care that the number stated to be suffering from malaria did not exceed the actual battalion strength. In this way I got a good deal more quinine than I needed, and I was able to bury some of it in a secret place to form an emergency reserve.

A few weeks after we arrived at Wampo I was strolling through the jungle when I came across a Siamese looking after some cows. We had a pleasant conversation in a mixture of languages, and he agreed to hand over one of his cows in return for a bottle of two hundred and fifty quinine tablets. We completed this transaction the next day and some Australian P.O.W.s put their butchering experience to good use. That same evening everyone in camp had half a pint of rather watery meat stew: the first meat we had tasted since leaving Singapore, and very delicious. From the very beginning of our time at Wampo, our camp authorities had protested to the Japs about our quite inadequate diet, and we had explained in medical terms what the consequences were likely to be. The Japanese had replied that the meat and vegetables we asked for were simply not available, and that none would arrive until the railway line reached our level. This was a very distant hope to rely on, since we were only cutting through the jungle and building up embankments: the plate-laying party was well behind us, and the train could not possibly catch up with us until the whole track was finished. Now, after this agreeable episode with a cow, we decided to approach the Japanese Commandant

again and tell him that we had accidentally met a Siamese who was prepared to sell us cattle. He had no objection to this at all; in fact he seemed pleased at the idea. He had no authority to spend money in purchasing meat for prisoners and he suggested that we should start a meat fund among ourselves and keep records of the cash spent; he for his part would try and get the money reimbursed by the Japanese authorities.

He was a curious man, Hattori by name. He spoke perfect English, he loved playing bridge, he was fond of quoting Gray's *Elegy* and, more unaccountably, a number of old political speeches by Lloyd George. He was a lawyer by profession and taught at the University of Tokyo.

The scheme worked very well and we managed to buy a skinny cow or water-buffalo every third day: the Japs helped themselves to a good deal of the meat, and at first they insisted on doing the slaughtering, shooting the beasts between the eyes, but they lost interest in this after one of them contrived only to wound a water-buffalo and to get tossed in a spectacular way in consequence.

We now had our first death in the camp: Lance-Corporal R. R. Hutchinson of the 2nd Gordon Highlanders died of acute dysentery, followed by perforation of the bowel. The fact that he did not respond to treatment was partly due to the severe dehydration caused by vomiting and diarrhoea. This boy's death affected us all and seemed ominous for the future: I reported it to the Japanese, and they laughed, not maliciously but in a nervous apologetic way they had in such situations.

The Japanese gave us some planks and we made a wooden coffin: this was the only occasion, so far as I know, when any P.O.W. was buried otherwise than naked

or in rags. We cleared and fenced a little cemetery about half a mile from the camp and conducted the funeral with as much dignity as we could muster: the Japs were very moved and many of them brought presents of cooked rice, bananas, bottles of Japanese beer, and other things to eat and drink, which they placed on top of the grave as nourishment for the departing spirit.

The Last Post sounded and we returned to camp. Perhaps no one went back to the grave that night; perhaps the dead man's spirit did in fact eat the food and drink the beer. At any rate, next morning only empty bottles remained, a fact which impressed the Japanese very considerably.

Lieutenant Hattori asked me to write a report on Hutchinson's death and I did so in fairly strong terms, laying the blame where it properly belonged. A few days later a Japanese officer arrived at Wampo and I was called in to Hattori's hut to see him: he bowed and hissed and then held up my report, commenting reproachfully on its strong language. I braced myself for a bashing and spoke out, making it very clear that unless our diet and living conditions were improved there would be many more deaths, for which the Japanese would have to take full responsibility. For almost a full minute after I had finished speaking this officer stared at me, while out of the corner of my eye I could see Hattori shifting from one foot to the other in a very uneasy way. I won the battle; they asked me whether there was anything else I wanted, and I said very emphatically that I needed salines for intravenous use, and that they would have to let me go to Kamburi by barge to buy what we needed.

They agreed, and there was great rejoicing in the camp. Everyone contributed money and I was inundated

with private orders for soap, tobacco, toothpaste and so on.

The great day came and we left in the early morning by pom-pom: myself, Lieutenant Hattori and a Jap guard. All the prisoners who were not at work came down to see us off. The river was still running fast, and I was fascinated by the scenery, which seemed to change completely every hundred yards. At about five in the afternoon we pulled into the shore just below a small Siamese village: the locals were very friendly and refused to accept payment for the chickens and vegetables they supplied to us. This may have been due to fear of the Japanese or a desire to help us prisoners: they were certainly consumed with curiosity and swarmed around staring at us. Before long I was holding a kind of sick parade, with Hattori's permission.

The first patient was a young man who complained of certain areas where his skin was discoloured and apparently without sensation. I pricked into these places with a sharp bamboo splinter and it was obvious that they were quite insensitive. Everyone concerned seemed to take it very calmly when I explained that the disease was certainly leprosy and that the patient should go to hospital at Bangkok.

The next patient was a Chinese about thirty-five years old; he was carried in by several relations and friends who looked very anxious. His expression was haggard and worn out and he was holding something with his right hand underneath his sarong. I had seen a similar case in Singapore: the condition is called Koro and is not uncommon among Malays and Chinese, taking the form of an obsessional fear that the penis will disappear into the belly. So the patient hangs on and refuses absolutely

to let go; when he gets tired he hands over to a friend or relation. In extreme and desperate cases, patients have been known to make doubly sure by the use of string or even nails.

I examined the patient with a good deal of elaborate show before the interested gaze of the entire village, and announced that I would cure him with a very special tablet. I always carry a few luminal tablets with me when I travel and I gave him two, explaining that if he would go immediately to bed, he would wake up in the morning and find himself cured.

We went back to the pom-pom loaded with presents, including several bottles of Siamese whisky, which is made from rice and is very fierce: we used it to wash down a delicious meal prepared by our boatman.

In the morning a large crowd collected to say good-bye to us. Hattori and I were suffering from fairly severe hangovers, and were treating them according to the best clinical practice with hairs of the dog, when down the path towards the boat came my second patient, with both hands gloriously free; behind him several of his womenfolk carried presents, chickens and eggs for the doctor who had relieved the village of its tiresome duty of strap-hanging.

The nights were still cold and as we moved away from the shore, patches of mist swirled about us: the river swung in broad graceful curves ahead of us and we saw a great beach of shining white sand, from which as we approached about forty wild peacock arose and poured away into the jungle in a dazzling torrent of rainbow colours. On we went, the scenery shifting and changing all the time until eventually we could see clearings and cultivated ground, houses here and there made of brick or

masonry instead of bamboo and leaves, and a variety of river traffic including Japanese patrols in motor boats. We passed a P.O.W. camp and eventually arrived at Kamburi at about four o'clock.

There was a good deal going on there, and the place seemed bigger than when we marched into it wearily from the opposite direction a few weeks previously. We left our pom-pom and made our way to the camp where we had spent a couple of nights on our way up north. The sun was beginning to dip behind a great mountain range as we approached the guardhouse; Lieutenant Hattori arranged a sleeping-place for us and told the guard that I was to be fed and then allowed to visit the town under escort. But he insisted that I had to be back by ten, and also that women and drink were definitely not allowed. I found this amusing: a long cool beer was a very attractive thought, but just then my physical condition was such that a whole harem of beauties dancing in silk could have done their worst without arousing the faintest spark of passion in me.

I was very anxious to find Boon Phong and discover just how much he could do for us and how far we could rely on him; I felt sure that he would be able to distract my Jap guard, who spoke no English, by a suitable offer of feminine company. So I made vivid expressive gestures to let the guard know that I was in a position to put him on to something. Luckily Boon Phong was at home; he was delighted to see me and in no time at all we were drinking beer in his back room. He understood my scheme at once and spoke very conspiratorially to the guard in Siamese, then turned to me with a wink and said sternly that I was to stay there while my guard attended to very urgent business outside.

As soon as we were alone, Boon Phong's family came in and made me very welcome. We talked about the war and about Japanese cruelty to P.O.W.s. Boon Phong was anxious to help as much as he could; he knew a Swiss by the name of Tanner, and through him, the Swiss Consul in Bangkok; he was very willing to buy medicines for us in Bangkok and bring them to the camp on one of his trading trips up river.

By now I was convinced that Boon Phong was perfectly genuine and anxious to help, and that I could speak freely with him. We arranged that next morning he would have ready for me a variety of drugs and also one hundred kilos of peanuts and rice polishings, the husks which are usually thrown away or used for cattle fodder but which are very full of the vitamins we needed. My Jap guard returned at about quarter to ten in a very jolly mood and looking very pleased with himself; we had some more beer and set out for the camp. I found myself during this walk unexpectedly liable to fall flat on my face and to burst into song.

All our plans worked out beautifully and we set off on our journey back to Wampo just before one o'clock the next day. The stuff which Boon Phong had promised turned up in a handcart and off we went. We saw a strange spectacle in Kumburi that morning: a chain gang of Siamese prisoners, dirty, sallow and red eyed, festooned with chains and in some cases burdened with heavy weights. It was peculiar to think that these prisoners probably looked upon me as a free man and envied me.

On our way we stopped at the strap-hanger's village and were given a wonderful feast with any amount of rice wine, after which it was all I could do to stop Hattori from staggering happily into the deep water. We

felt very fragile indeed when we continued our journey the next morning, and the whole world seemed to be throbbing in time with the pom-pom engine. There was a great deal of jubilation at Wampo when the prisoners learned how successful my trip had been.

We had only been away a few days but a great deal had been done. The hospital hut was ready and the special dysentery wing (to take fifty cases) very nearly ready: hut-building had made good progress too and every man now had a roof over his head, and in some cases walls at his side as well.

The whole atmosphere at Wampo had changed somehow, and the men seemed happy. Lieutenant Hattori continued very co-operative and he even allowed us to hold a camp concert. This was a magnificent show, attended by a large number of Japanese, who kept nipping behind the scenes to make sure that our seductive chorus girls were in fact prisoners of war and male. We made the costumes from odd bits of cloth and tree-bark, and wigs from old rope; we even improvised make-up from ground tapioca flour and various juices and saps.

In those days our camp looked almost romantic after dark, since we were allowed to build great fires: we were under-nourished and we felt the November cold bitterly.

Work now began in real earnest: and in all matters connected with it we came under the direct control of the Japanese railway engineers, who were absolute bastards. As I have explained already, the main task was the endless hacking away of almost impenetrable undergrowth, leaving stumps that could sometimes be dug up or pulled out, but occasionally needed dynamite. The blasting technique left us with big craters which had to

be filled in very laboriously. If the guards were asleep, as they were fairly often, we used to roof these craters over with saplings and bamboo poles and pile leaves and earth on top; this was a good deal less laborious, and later on, when heavy trains started to pass over the line, a number of very gratifying subsidences occurred, which the Japanese never attributed to us.

Each day a stint of work was given to us — so many square metres of jungle to be cleared, so much embankment to be built — and the working party was never allowed to go back to camp until the allotted task was completed. If a man went sick, he could not be replaced: the others had to manage without him. Normally the Japs would allow two of the least healthy men in a working party to make a fire and brew what we optimistically called tea, not only for the prisoners but for the Japs as well: the heat was intense in the steaming jungle, and unless the fluid lost by sweating was made good any man, prisoner or guard, was liable to collapse through dehydration and heat exhaustion.

It was a tough life and I did all I could to lighten the men's burden. Every day I allowed fifteen men to go sick over and above the number who actually were ill, and in this way I made it possible for every man in rotation to have a day's rest. There were one or two toughs who used to abuse this privilege and swing the lead. I remember one man in particular who had been in Changi Gaol when Singapore capitulated: several of his cronies carried him into my hospital hut one evening, groaning terribly and swearing that he had injured his left ankle when at work. There were no symptoms, but I put him in bed to be on the safe side. A few days later we were taking part in a rather unequal athletic contest

with the Japanese, when I saw my suffering friend winning the half-mile in splendid fashion. Apparently life in hospital bored him and he decided to get better.

We had more serious cases from time to time. On 28th November, Captain Richardson asked me to see a member of his Battalion who was exhibiting all the symptoms of acute appendicitis. I agreed with this diagnosis; we kept the patient under close observation and meanwhile made preparations to operate in case it became necessary. There was no operating theatre, so we built a crude table out of bamboo in the M.I. room. By way of surgical equipment we had three pairs of artery forceps, one rusty pair of scissors and some equally rusty surgical needles; also some gut and one large bottle of chloroform. What we had not got was a knife: my attempts to buy one in Kamburi had failed.

Time passed and it became evident that we would have to operate. At the last minute I remembered that one of our Volunteer officers, Major Corke, was the proud possessor of a cut-throat razor, which I borrowed. We sterilized our few instruments by boiling them in a four-gallon kerosene tin, and we also boiled bits of towel and old shirts to act as dressings. I scrubbed up as best I could and dipped my hands in a weak solution of lysol mixed with boiled water. The Japanese Medical Officer from Tarsau was on a visit to Wampo at the time, but he refused to help: he laughed in a silly nervous way and said he would just watch. Daddy Richardson gave the anaesthetic and when the patient was out he handed over to Pinky Riley and scrubbed up to help me.

Then we started. The cut-throat razor was extremely sharp and I had to be very careful not to go too deep: it would have been very easy to go straight into the

peritoneal cavity and injure the bowel. There was very little fat between the skin and the muscles and I came down to the peritoneum almost at once. I grasped it with forceps and very carefully opened it with the razor, using the handles of two bent spoons as retractors. Gently moving the coils of intestine, I found an ugly gangrenous appendix, looking as if it might burst at any moment. This was carefully removed and we buried the stump with a purse-string suture in the caecum and then closed the peritoneum, sutured the muscles, and finally closed the wound with linen stitches.

The patient was in a very unhealthy condition, having suffered like the rest of us from malaria, dysentery and malnutrition; we had operated under very insanitary conditions, and it was a matter for great astonishment and relief that the wound did not go septic.

In our half-starved condition, we were obsessed by food, and foraged continually with great energy and imagination, very soon discarding what traces remained of our European fastidiousness. There was a plant which grew abundantly round the camp, a creeper with soft leaves the colour of beetroot; somebody discovered that it tasted exactly like spinach when boiled, and it made a lot of difference to our diet of rice. There were various other wild vegetables; but dietetically and gastronomically speaking meat was the thing, and the men always kept an eye open for snakes when they were clearing the jungle. Boiled or grilled snake was very acceptable indeed, especially python, once one had acquired a taste for it. One day we found an iguana in the jungle near the dysentery ward; several of the men ran hallooing after it with sticks and stones, and it took refuge up a

tree. The iguana is a big lizard, looking rather like a prehistoric monster; this one was six feet long and it was wonderful to see it moving and climbing with such agility. We spent nearly half an hour flinging stones to bring the creature down, but only succeeded in hurting some of the men; eventually we contrived a long pole and poked it down; the fall stunned it, and we soon put it out of its misery. I kept the skin, which was beautifully patterned in green and yellow and red, for a long time afterwards, until a covetous Jap relieved me of it.

The natives in those parts value the iguana very highly as food: we enjoyed this one immensely. Its liver weighed two pounds or more, and when sliced and fried in the creature's own intestinal fat was perfectly delicious, rather like calf's liver: it called poignantly for bacon. The rest of the meat was whitish in colour and tasted like rather fishy chicken.

Some of the men used to catch and eat monkeys. This seemed cannibalistic to me and I could never manage it, but unlike the elusive iguana, monkeys were very easy to catch. You fixed a big piece of bamboo to the ground with a small hole in the top, and put some rice or fruit inside. Along came the monkey, put his hand in the hole, grabbed the prize, and then tried to pull his hand out. Of course the loaded hand was too big, and the monkey was either too stupid or else too greedy to let go, so he sat there until someone came along and tapped him on the head.

One morning while I was carrying out a sick parade a Japanese cook came to see me, carrying a slimy white object wrapped up in a piece of banana leaf. It looked like flattened macaroni and was obviously a tapeworm. Now I had among my medicines a bottle containing a black

syrupy liquid which had leaked out and obliterated the label, and I suspected that it was *felix mas*, the male fern extract used for the treatment of tapeworms: here was a chance to find out whether this guess was correct. Not remembering the correct dosage I gave the Jap two teaspoonfuls, which was on the lavish side. Next morning my patient came back carrying an enormous burden of macaroni in an even larger banana leaf: we uncoiled it carefully on the ground and found to everybody's interest and surprise that it was 21 feet 5 inches long and also that it was all there complete with head. This successful outcome was the consequence of a fairly heavy overdose of *felix mas*: when after the war I remembered this episode and looked up the correct dosage, I was amazed that the Jap had not passed his liver as well.

My patient worked in the Japanese officers' cookhouse, and he showed his gratitude for this deliverance by sending across to the hospital, at eleven every morning, a two-gallon wooden bucket of Japanese officers' stew. I had tasted this before: it was made of chicken, vegetables, edible seaweed and brewers' yeast, and it did a great deal to save the lives of our weakest patients, and in building up their strength and improving their morale.

This question of morale was a most serious one for us, since once a man lost the will to live drugs and treatment were useless. We used every possible subterfuge to keep the men cheerful, even sometimes inventing false news of the progress of the war, and sometimes we succeeded. If a man was past caring about such things it was now and again possible to make successful use of the deeply ingrained habit of military discipline: one could order a man to recover, and even threaten him with court

martial if he died. This may seem a little far-fetched, but I have known it to work. I followed the principles of occupational therapy whenever possible, improving men's morale by giving them something to do. We devoted much time and effort to the pursuit and capture of bugs and lice, which we then slipped in vast quantities into the Japanese soldiers' huts. Techniques of the chase varied. One man was an expert on louse catching, having been a P.O.W. in the First World War, and he told me that the thing to do was to place a small piece of cotton-wool on my navel when retiring for the night. I thought he was pulling my leg, but I tried it, and sure enough, next morning I found in the cottonwool at least two dozen fat juicy parasites. We gave weekly lectures to the men on hygiene, for the individual's own sake and for the common good: negligence gave dysentery even wider scope. In particular we told men always to dig a hole and fill it up afterwards when they obeyed the call of nature in the jungle. I made use of this form of sanitation myself, since I had caught dysentery and was anxious to scrutinize the signs of its progress day by day more precisely than would have been possible in the confusion of the communal deep latrine. Walking off on one occasion into the jungle for this purpose, I suddenly heard a hissing sound, and saw almost at my feet a large black cobra, already in the striking position: hood fully opened, head swaying from side to side, beady black eyes watching me, forked tongue flickering. I stood there like stone for an instant, and then ran so fast that I forgot my original purpose for two whole days afterwards.

Daddy Richardson and I built two bamboo platforms in the M.I. room; at night we slept there, in the day we used them as examination couches. The M.I. room had

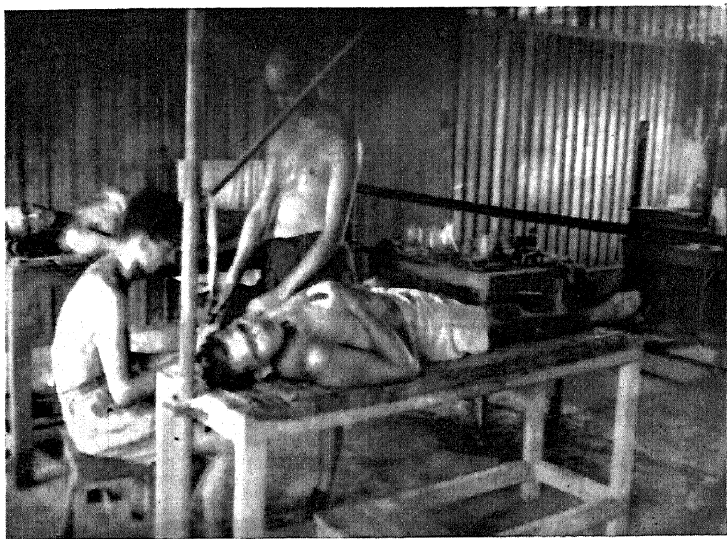
a little door leading into the main hospital ward, behind which we had built a small bamboo hut to serve as a mortuary. We very seldom had any occasion to carry out a post mortem, since when the men died it was usually for very obvious reasons: the mortuary was only made necessary by the fact that the Japs did not always give permission for burial immediately.

One night Richardson and I were awakened rudely by appalling screams coming from the direction of the mortuary, followed by the noise of a rifle being dropped and feet running. We jumped up and by the glare of a dying fire we saw a Jap running away from the mortuary as though the devil were after him. We went in and there on the table was a P.O.W. sitting up and rubbing his eyes, alarmed but certainly alive. He explained that he had taken to sleeping on the mortuary table because the bugs and lice were less numerous there than in the hospital wards.

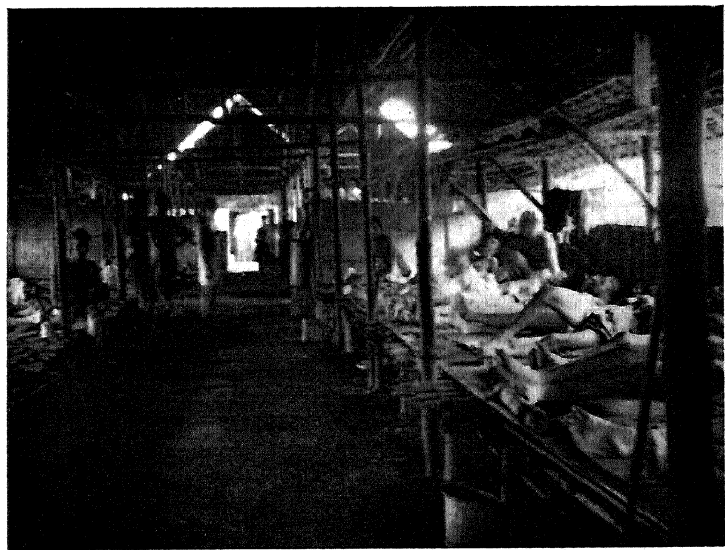
Apparently the Jap guard, snooping about on his rounds, had shone his torch into the mortuary and had been very surprised to see a human form on the table, since no deaths had been reported. Aroused by the bright light of the torch, the dead man had sat up muttering, frightening the guard out of his wits. Now the guard came back with three of his colleagues, and my zombie patient received a beating for not being dead.

The Japs had no doctor of their own at Wampo, and their medical orderly was very ignorant. I was often called across to their quarters to attend one of them, and I never failed to bring with me and distribute judiciously around the huts a suitable assortment of lively parasites.

In the course of time I treated Jap soldiers for a number of different complaints, notably for syphilis. In the



GIVING A BLOOD TRANSFUSION



A CAMP HOSPITAL WARD

Japanese army it is a serious offence for a man to catch any venereal infection, and a worse offence for him to conceal it. This provided a strong incentive to self-medication and private treatment by unqualified people, and many of them had suffered a good deal in consequence of various clumsy techniques.

The correct treatment in those days involved the injection of an arsenical compound. We had none of this, and it was quite a usual thing therefore for Jap soldiers who had become infected to acquire somehow an ampoule of the stuff and bring it to me to be injected confidentially. It was very important that the injection should be made wholly into a vein, as any of the liquid which escaped into the tissues of the arm would cause a very severe reaction, the arm becoming swollen and completely stiff. The Japs knew this very well and compelled us to suck a little blood into the syringe both before and after the actual injecting in order to make quite sure that the tip of the needle was in fact within the lumen of the vein. They watched us very narrowly, and for the most part we took appropriate care; but there were certain peculiarly vicious and sadistic characters among them who deserved to be given the works, and in these cases we usually found it possible to spill a certain amount of the fluid into the tissues. Soon the fun would start and the elbow would become very painfully swollen and stiff; we made a point of choosing the right arm, so that our victim on meeting one of his officers was quite unable to salute. The officer realized the situation at once and saw that the man received a little of what was owing to him on our account.

Later on, of course, there would be acrimonious disputes and we used to put the blame, very unfairly, on

the quality of the arsenical preparation supplied to us. It was made in Shanghai and was in fact excellent: I managed to secure some of it for treating malaria among our own people.

It became necessary before long to devote a good deal of time to this business of fixing Jap guards: not only for the sport of it or for revenge, but in some cases to save the lives of P.O.W.s who were being victimized. One splendid technique depended upon the fact that the Japanese took great pride in their horsey protruding teeth. The game was to express vast admiration for the teeth of some specially vicious specimen, and to tell him that we had among us a dentist who could not only repair teeth but could also polish them until they sparkled like diamonds. The bait was usually swallowed whole, and later on, by appointment, one of us would be at work polishing and shining away in a spirit of admiration and enthusiasm; then, before the patient was sent away, a probe would be dipped unobtrusively in a nice fresh hot specimen of bacillary and amoebic dysentery, and stroked in the gentlest friendliest way against his tongue. Within two or three days the man so treated went down with acute bacillary dysentery, and ten to thirty days later this developed into the amoebic variety, so that he would be sent to the Japanese base hospital down the river and pass out of our lives for a period which might be anything between two months and six.

In December 1942 we had another case of acute appendicitis and realized that we would have to operate again. The case had developed very severe malaria and dysentery, and the appendix turned out to be a nasty retrocoecal one; but we were better organized than we were the last time. I used the same cut-throat razor and

was struck again by the absence of fat on the patient's tissues; the operation took place at 11 p.m. by the light of two rather smoky hurricane lamps, a small torch with very tired batteries, and some candles. We used a solution of lysol as an antiseptic. Everything went off all right, and when it was all over we stood outside the hospital hut, smoking cigarettes and drinking what passed for tea. This peaceful moment of achievement was rudely interrupted by the horrible shouting and coughing of a P.O.W. who had been watching the operation and had seen us drinking tea after it. Anxious to join us in this, he had dipped his mug into a six-gallon container of hot liquid which he thought was tea; in fact it was the lysol solution we had used to sterilise our instruments and dressings. Someone immediately stuck two fingers down the man's throat to make him vomit; I ran to get some apomorphine and gave him a shot of it. This substance is used to induce vomiting in cases of poisoning: God only knows how I came to possess it. I had never used it before and I hope I shall never have occasion to use it again: the vomiting which it started off was so violent that I thought that the man would burst a blood vessel. But he got over it and was all right next morning, except for a sore throat and gullet.

The appendix case did very well until the sixth day, but then he developed a typical though rather severe malarial rigor. This was followed by the usual sweating and high fever, and early next morning he had a severe rectal haemorrhage and died in spite of my administration of the intravenous salines which I had bought at Kamburi.

It always surprised me that so many men recovered after operations performed in such primitive conditions on patients in such very poor health. We only operated as

a last resort, which meant that those who came under the knife — under the cut-throat razor, rather — were already suffering from malaria, gross malnutrition, and varying degrees of avitaminosis, particularly beri-beri and pellagra. Many of them had acute or chronic bacillary and amoebic dysentery as well, not to mention big tropical ulcers.

Since we never had enough drugs to treat everybody properly, we were constantly being faced with the most appalling decisions. Drugs were withheld as a matter of course until life depended upon their use, but then we had to decide who was to have them. On these occasions I gave preference to married men, especially those with many children, though I often knew that some personal friend of mine would have to die in consequence of this decision. I think I did right: God alone knows how hard it was to decide such a matter. Over and above this, we had to carry the burden and responsibility of easing, so far as we could, the misery and terror of those who were not going to recover. Sometimes we gave them an injection of plain water, making believe it was emetine, or whatever else was needed but not available. In the last stages one had a task like that of comforting a frightened child. I had one man, a sergeant-major in the S.S.V.F., a big burly fellow of tremendous personality and a tower of strength in the Battalion; now he went down with diphtheria, which caused paralysis in his throat, so that whenever he tried to swallow fluid it regurgitated up his nose. Then the nerve type of beri-beri attacked his left foot; I have never seen a man so full of the desire to live, and all I could do was to sit beside him and hold his hand until he calmed down and in the end died quite quietly.

Episodes of this kind left one completely washed out, and unable to control one's emotions; until, in the long course of our captivity, the repeated experience of such suffering ceased to affect one so violently, leaving only a vast tolerance of other people's shortcomings and a feeling of weariness and old age.

Not far from Wampo there was a native village, quite a small one with a total population of about fifty: jungle folk living under very primitive conditions and full of malaria. It was difficult to understand how they ever kept alive. The men used to fish in the river while the women grew a few onions and egg-plants and runner beans on little plots of land precariously reclaimed from the jungle: one or two of them owned a few ducks, hens and pigs.

The Japs looked on these people with suspicion, believing that our diseases had spread from their village. I felt perfectly certain that the boot was on the other foot, that the illnesses in the village had spread there from the camp, except in so far as they were endemic to the area. At any rate, I was ordered to visit the village daily and keep a medical eye on the people.

The chief of the tribe was a woman, who lived in a biggish bamboo-and-palm-leaf hut built on stilts near the entrance to the village. She was always to be found sitting on the verandah of her palace chewing betel-nut; when she saw me she would clear her throat noisily and then spit out the red juice of the betel-nut very forcibly, so as to hit the ground about fifteen feet behind me; then she would greet me cheerfully in a sing-song voice. She was a good shot, and although the betel-nut juice flashed by me like a red racing car it never hit me. We called her Betel-nut Bess.

Bess was no chicken. She had scraggy white hair full of nits, and wore a sarong which covered her completely from her shrivelled-up belly downwards: never had I seen such long, flat breasts. She ruled the village, in spite of her beauty, with an iron hand; she and I became good friends. She never hesitated to speak her mind, and she was fond of telling me (through Woodroffe Hill, our camp interpreter) that she admired my beard and my hairy chest immensely.

She used to explain her people's troubles and diseases to me; the diseases tended to be much the same as ours. I used to advise her and give her what medicine I could spare: mostly quinine since my false sick returns had brought me in an ample supply of it. In return, by way of consultation fee, Bess would hand over a few eggs, a bunch of onions, some egg-plants or bananas, or something similar: on very special occasions, a duck.

As time went on I was called to the village more and more often, and Bess used to start loading me with presents even before I began my consultations and advice. On these occasions I always wore my best suit: an officer's cap set at the regimental angle, a Red Cross armlet, and a G-string. Bess never failed to express her admiration for my manly person, beard and chest in particular.

One day, in great confidence, Bess told me that she had a beautiful daughter aged thirteen, and proposed to show her to me: she had decided to give the girl to me as a present after the war in return for my kindness to the people of the village. She fully appreciated that my standing as a P.O.W. limited the possibilities of the situation, but she would arrange for the girl to come over secretly from the other side of the river, where she lived in hiding from the Japs. I did not want to hurt her

feelings, so I thanked her profoundly and expressed my impatience to see the girl saying that if she turned out half as beautiful as her mother I would indeed be a happy man. Bess responded to this flattery by clearing her throat prodigiously; in fact she very nearly embraced me. We agreed that she would send for her daughter as soon as possible and would then let me know, so that I could go over to the village at once, before the Japs could see the girl.

Two days later a little Siamese boy came to the hospital and called me: I had forgotten all about Bess and her daughter and I hurried across with Woodroffe Hill, expecting to be led to some sick person's bedside. I was pleasantly surprised when after the throat-clearing ceremony Bess told me to close my eyes; when I was told to open them again there before me stood a delicious young woman wearing only a sarong. She looked straight at me, and then lowered her eyes in submission to her Lord and Master, afterwards giving me a very inviting come-hither look. But Bess was a practical woman of the world, otherwise she could never have held down the dignity and responsibility of her position: that, she explained, was enough — the girl must immediately go back to the other side of the river, or the Japs would get her. And I was told, very seriously, to come back after the end of the war and collect her.

The sad thing is that when the war did come to an end I never had an opportunity of going back; and whenever I spoke nonchalantly to my wife of paying a visit to Siam and going up the river to do some fishing and hunting she vetoed the idea, explaining that I would only catch malaria. Perhaps I would have caught more than malaria.

One day I was called out unexpectedly and marched to the guard room: the Japs appeared to be very worried about something. There, beautifully dressed and sitting at his ease in a chair, was Boon Phong: apparently he had arrived at the camp and asked for Captain Pavillard very casually, as if social calls were commonly paid on prisoners of war. The Japanese could not imagine how a well dressed Siamese civilian knew my name or the fact that I was at Wampo; they seemed very angry, and my explanations did not please them at all. But Boon Phong saved the situation by saying that he had ten thousand duck eggs for sale; he gave each guard a dozen eggs, and after that it was a very simple matter to arrange with the administration that he would sell the rest of them to us at five cents each. Also, he offered to make regular deliveries in future.

That day everyone literally stuffed himself with eggs. For my part I started off with a twelve-egg omelette and went on to six scrambled eggs; with my afternoon tea I had three poached eggs and just before going to bed I had three boiled eggs. After this orgy I was not the only one to suffer a restless night.

Boon Phong had brought the medicines which I had ordered. Many of these had been bought out of a special fund which had been started by the Swiss consul in Bangkok, Herr Singenthaler, and also by another Swiss, Herr Tanner. Most of the money was given by German and Italian civilians, who were of course allies of the Japanese and exempt from internment. For these medicines we had nothing to pay.

Boon Phong left that evening, but before he went he put a question to me which caused me a great deal of anguish. I had a passport photograph of myself; Boon

Phong was going up river now on business and he proposed to pick me up three days later as he was passing Wampo on his way down stream. He explained that I could travel from Bangkok as an Italian priest, then into Indo-China and on to Chungking. It all sounded very simple, and I knew I could do it.

But my men were in the camp with no hope of escape, and they were quite short enough of medical care already. Very regretfully, therefore, I decided that the answer had to be no.

Chapter Four

As work on the railway progressed, the Japs found it necessary to break us up into three detachments. This meant that I was parted from 'D' Battalion: they were sent down to Wampo South, while I and the other doctors had to stay behind in the old camp, travelling backwards and forwards every day to visit our patients.

A new camp had to be built at Wampo South, and then our men got to work on an exceptionally strenuous and even dangerous part of the job. The camp was built on a piece of flat ground quite near the river, on the other side of which was a high cliff of solid rock. A ledge a quarter of a mile long had to be carved out of this, to carry the railway; working up there, sixty feet above the river, completely exposed to the blazing sun, our men suffered terribly, and many of them collapsed from heat exhaustion. This was the result, not only of the heat, but also of the glare of sunlight reflected from the bare rocks all round; those men who managed to improvise sun glasses out of odd bits of coloured glass managed much better. In the same way, it was possible to make shoes of a sort out of jungle leaves and tree bark, so as to reduce the pain of walking on scorching rock. Even with the aid of such devices, only the strong ones could carry on, working blindly, in a jerky mechanical fashion as if hypnotized or dazed, aware only of the harsh sunlight boring mercilessly through their eyeballs. The body has a natural and auto-

matic heat-regulating mechanism, but this can only be over-taxed so far: for many of the men there came a time when the brain lost control of the situation. Then they would lie there, chest heaving, heart throbbing, face grey and streaming with perspiration. I got these cases into hospital as quickly as I could, but they were suffering very severely from shock and often died quite soon afterwards.

The actual burden of the work was made easier than it might have been, however, by the fact that the Japs provided material and equipment for blasting. The vast explosions which took place could be heard at enormous distances. I remember the first: I was doing my ward rounds at the time, and I had not known that there was going to be any blasting. So when I heard this terrific bang I flung myself flat on the ground at once; everyone else did the same, our reflexes having been thoroughly conditioned during the battle of Singapore. We got up sheepishly, feeling rather fools.

The Japs had a peculiar sense of humour, and very often they used to fire the dynamite charges embedded in the rock without first sounding the warning signal: they did this for the fun of seeing the P.O.W.s run madly for shelter. This amusing game led to many accidents. The first victim was a cook, who was working at the time in the camp, across the river from where the blasting was taking place. A small piece of rock hit him on the forehead between the eyes: Pinky Riley 'phoned for me at once, and when I came I found the man suffering badly from shock. I examined him and I could actually see his brain tissue with small splinters of bone adhering to it. I cleaned the wound very carefully with boiled water and removed the bone fragments, then filled the cavity with

three M. and B. 693 tablets crushed to powder, and applied a dressing. Fortunately the brain tissue itself did not appear to be damaged, and after four weeks in hospital the patient had fully recovered and never developed any after-effects.

The next victim was not so lucky: a large piece of rock hit him on the face, damaging the tear duct and leaving a nasty lacerated wound which extended from the inner angle of his left eye to the outer margin of the left lip. I put in eighteen stitches and he recovered all right, but with a mild degree of facial paralysis: careful plastic surgery after the war improved matters somewhat, but he was disfigured for life.

We made repeated representations to the Japs about this aspect of their behaviour: they explained to us that it was our men's own fault and that they should get out of the way quicker.

Once a week we had a half-holiday, and the Japs would often enlist our help in large-scale fishing. The river was teeming with fish; a party of P.O.W.s who were able to swim waited by the riverside, and a Jap threw several hand-grenades into the river some two hundred yards up-stream, so as to explode under water. Enormous quantities of stunned fish floated down stream, to be landed by the waiting swimmers, and the Japs always posted several look-outs to make sure that all the fish was brought ashore so that they could pick the best.

Here again one could diddle them: it was just a question of thinking up the right trick. The way to embezzle fish under these circumstances is as follows: you tie a stout wire round your leg, which is of course out of sight while you are wading or swimming, and when a suitable fish comes along you push the loose end of this

wire through its gills and allow it to hang there, out of sight and troubling nobody. Then at some convenient moment you can unhook the wire, with several fish on it, from your leg, and fasten it unobtrusively to the underwater roots of a tree by the edge. When the party is over, you can come back and claim your prize.

But the fish in this river were not all beer and skittles: some of them bit. There was one particularly vicious variety, only about two or three inches long but fond of hunting in enormous shoals, and their idea of a joke was to attack us while we were bathing and bite off small bits of our private parts. The scars which resulted were capable of subsequent misinterpretation by insurance doctors or by ever-loving wives, so I gave certificates to the victims making it quite clear that V.D. was not responsible. These certificates were written on any old dirty scrap of paper and read as follows:

To Whom It May Concern

This is to certify that.....

whilst a P.O.W. in Siam lost a portion of his
Foreskin
Scrotum as a result of a fish bite whilst swimming,
naked, in the river.

Sgd.

Captain: M.O., 1st S.S.V.F.

On 10th April, 1943, I was walking up towards the officers' hut to see Bob Lucas, the Adjutant of 'D' Battalion, who was down with malaria, when glancing down a jungle path I was surprised to see a strange party approaching. They were British P.O.W.s escorted by Jap guards and they were carrying heavy packages slung on long bamboo poles. There were eighteen of these

packages and I saw with great surprise that they were field medical panniers of the standard army type. It seemed almost unbelievable that the Japs should be sending medical supplies up to Wampo; I watched carefully, wondering what to make of it, while the party reported to the Jap guard room and then unloaded their cargo at the camp rice store, not far from the hospital, placing it carefully under lock and key.

Full of curiosity, I got talking to a member of the party; I gathered that these panniers contained British drugs captured at the fall of Singapore and that they were only going to be left at Wampo for one night. Early next morning the party was to continue its journey, carrying these medical supplies another stage towards their ultimate destination, which was on the frontier between Burma and Siam: they were to be used for the benefit of Jap soldiers fighting the British.

I thought hard. The panniers were not padlocked, but only tied with bits of wire and string. We were running short of medicines, and a move up country was rumoured. The rice store where the panniers had been locked up was only the usual kind of bamboo-and-palm-leaf hut: it had an entrance quite near the hospital, known as the smithy, since a certain amount of ironwork in connection with the railway was done there. Separating the rice store from the smithy was an inner wall or partition, about ten feet high, not reaching to the roof of the hut.

Without telling Daddy Richardson what I was up to I got hold of Pinky Riley and made him keep a sharp lookout near the smithy and let me know if any Japs turned up. Then I scrambled up quite easily over the bamboo partition and into the rice store: the first pannier I opened was full of tins, each tin containing

one thousand M. and B. 693 tablets. This was wonderful, as this particular drug was very effective with many tropical diseases. I placed a tin inside my tattered old shorts and tied the pannier up again, and then departed very quickly, with a bulge in front of me that must have made me look at least six months pregnant.

I went back to the hospital and told Daddy Richardson what I had done, and then buried the tin.

This was excellent, but something more substantial was obviously called for, and there was very little time. I went to the officers' hut and explained the situation to Lt.-Col. Lilly, the British Camp Commandant; I pointed out that if we moved up country soon, which seemed very likely as the Wampo stretch of line was nearly completed, our medical situation would be very acute. We would not presumably get any more help from Boon Phong; in any case, he had not turned up for some time. So I wanted to plan a raid.

Lilly called together the commanding officers of 'D' and 'F' Battalions, and they weighed the matter up very seriously. Soon they came to the conclusion that my scheme was quite impractical: the Jap Commandant lived practically on top of the rice store, and it was more than likely that extra guards would be laid on to look after these precious supplies. Anyone caught taking part in such a raid would be decapitated at once. The camp administration did not approve and would have nothing to do with the plan.

I went away, feeling well and truly put in my place. But I could not accept this situation for long: and I knew much better than those officers did exactly what a move up country was likely to mean, in medical terms.

So I went to the men's lines and called out four

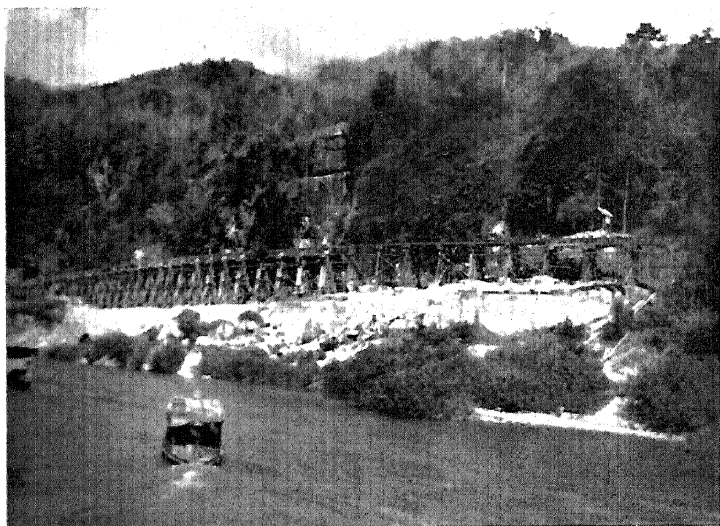
individuals: I explained what I was going to do, and described the dangers and the consequences of being caught. They responded absolutely, without any hesitation at all.

I swore them to secrecy and we worked out every detail of my plan, going over and over again until we had it all by heart. Nobody else was to be told; a few trustworthy men were to be brought along to act as sentries and give a pre-arranged whistle if any Japs appeared, but they were not to be told what was going on.

We planned to start at 9 p.m. sharp. It was obvious that the panniers could not be properly examined in the rice store; each one would have to be lifted over the ten-foot bamboo partition and carried smartly along to the hospital M.I. room twenty-five yards away. There Richardson, Pinky and I would examine the contents of each pannier with a light and take out a suitable quantity of what we needed, but so as to avoid making it obvious that the panniers had been interfered with.

I arranged to go in with the raiding party on their first entry and show them where the panniers were, and then to stay in the M.I. room. I had enlisted four men: two to lift the panniers over the partition, and two to carry them through the smithy and along to the hospital. Pinky was to take the stolen drugs and bury them as we went along.

Eventually the time for action came: we made sure that the coast was clear and that our sentries were alert, and then we went into the smithy and started to climb the bamboo partition, very carefully, very quietly. But just then we distinctly heard the pre-arranged danger signal. We dropped off the partition and crouched in the darkest corners we could find, our hearts pounding: slowly a Jap guard's footsteps marched towards us.



BRIDGE AT SOUTH WAMPO



THREE OF THE JAPANESE GUARDS
'SILVER BULLET' IN THE MIDDLE

Time stopped, agonizingly, and the universe was full of nothing but those footsteps. Furiously, we turned not only our eyes but even our thoughts away from the guard: I had often thought that thought-waves or something similar can betray a man who is trying to hide, and now I made myself imagine that I was falling out of an aeroplane, tumbling and somersaulting, until in my mind's eye I could see only a whirl of earth and sky. This ugly thought was powerful enough to distract my mind and to prevent it from wandering off and attracting the attention of that man just outside.

After what seemed an infinite time of suspense we heard the guard's footsteps receding into the darkness. The all-clear signal was given and soon we were over the partition and at work. I helped the men get the first pannier over and along to the hospital, and soon we had it opened.

And so the work went on, easily and rhythmically: as soon as we had finished extracting a few items from one pannier, another would arrive. It was wonderful and sad to see such a stock of life-saving drugs: sad because of the men now dead for lack of them. We worked with fierce accuracy and speed.

Only one episode, but that an alarming one, interrupted the smooth progress of our work. I put my hand into the last pannier but one to take out a small bottle, and felt a searing pain, as if a red hot poker was being driven into the middle finger of my right hand. I let out a scream of agony, thinking that a snake had bitten me. The pain was unbearable, and within a few seconds I was bathed in a cold perspiration and felt like fainting. I told Richardson and Pinky to look for the snake, since it was important to know what kind it was: I held the hurt

finger tight with my left hand, ready to have it slashed open with a razor and dipped in a strong solution of permanganate. But to my relief we found not a snake but a big armour-plated scorpion. My finger throbbed all night and was quite numb for a week afterwards.

Eventually we were told that it was all over: the last of the panniers had been put back exactly as before. I looked at my watch: it was 2 a.m. I thanked the men and commented on the speed with which they had man-handled those heavy panniers over the ten-foot partition. They said, apologetically, that they had opened the door of the rice store from the inside and had brought the panniers out that way, instead of over the partition as they had been told. I nearly had a fit: the front door of the rice store was right opposite the hut of the Jap Commandant in charge of railway construction.

Next morning, with a sigh of relief, I watched the Jap guards and the prisoners carrying the panniers move together out of our camp. Obviously they suspected nothing; I have seldom been so glad to see anybody off the premises. When they had gone I told Lt.-Col. Lilly what I had done, and explained that we now had a year's supply of medicines. The old man replied, 'I had a notion you would do it, Pav; as a matter of fact I haven't slept a bloody wink all night.'

I arranged that the loot should be left buried for several days in case of unexpected and delayed repercussions, and that it should be shared out equally between 'D', 'B' and 'F' Battalions if all went well.

When I got back to England in October 1945 I submitted a report to the War Office, describing this episode and suggesting that the bravery and devotion of the men concerned should receive official recognition.

None was given, and for the record their names are as follows:

No. 5707 C.Q.M.S. Metcalfe, J.M., F.M.S.V.F.

No. 7830 Private Wadsworth, K.T., F.M.S.V.F.

No. 7396 Sergeant Cassidy, T.P., F.M.S.V.F.

No. 13610 Lance-Corporal Miles, E.T., F.M.S.V.F.

I have no doubt that the knowledge that they had put a fast one across the Japanese and had saved the lives of any number of their comrades was then, and still remains, worth more to them than any medal.

Our Wampo stretch of line was almost finished: only part of the work on the cliff face remained to be done. To speed things up the Japs brought in two thousand more P.O.W.s and started what we called the 'Speedo Period'. Everything had to be done literally at the double. The weekly half-holiday was abolished. The men set off to work before dawn and returned late at night; they had no chance to wash themselves or air their bedding and the number of bugs and lice in action against us increased rapidly. Skin diseases, especially scabies and ringworm, attacked everyone, while malaria, dysentery, and deficiency diseases took full advantage of our exhaustion. Imperial Japanese Army Headquarters had given orders that guards were to bash hell out of the P.O.W.s if they did not work harder.

One evening Richardson and I were standing outside the M.I. room when an injured Gordon Highlander was brought to us, a man called English. He was bleeding profusely from a wound over the right temple, caused, we were told, by a Jap guard's rifle butt. English had been rash enough to laugh happily on seeing a Jap guard being beaten up by one of his officers. The guard

in question was nicknamed Silver Bullet because he suffered from syphilis and was always coming to the hospital with a tube of the arsenical preparation which has that name in medical slang: as soon as he got away from his punishment, he made straight for the men's lines and bashed English across the head with his rifle butt, to punish him for laughing. Daddy Richardson and I were on the point of cleaning the wound when Silver Bullet himself appeared at the door of the M.I. room. English had recovered from the first shock, and flung himself at the Jap, cursing and screaming and calling him all the names in existence, some of which even I had never heard of. He was a tough Highlander and completely off his head: it was all we could do to restrain him. The Jap retreated a little and slapped a bullet into the firing chamber of his rifle: then he paused and ran to his guard room for assistance.

This was a delicate situation. English was still being held down and was still struggling furiously for a chance to go after Silver Bullet's blood. This would have been suicide, so I called for help in holding him down and quickly slapped some morphia into the vein of his arm. A few seconds later, Silver Bullet and several other guards arrived with their rifles ready and murder in their eyes: I confronted them with what appeared to be a corpse, and explained that when English was hit on the head the blow must have burst a blood vessel, which had driven him fighting mad. I added that the haemorrhage must be a bad one and that English was in a coma and might die.

The Japs looked very worried at this and Silver Bullet humbly asked me not to mention the matter to any Japanese officer. I agreed, but added that if the man died

I would have to make out a report, and because of this, the Japs kept enquiring about the patient's progress all through the night.

I knew that Silver Bullet would not leave the matter at that, so I kept English in bed for a week and told him to lie very low and behave himself if any Japs appeared. Eventually I discharged him and just as I feared Silver Bullet went for him at once, marched him to the guard room, slapped his face several times, kicked him in the balls, and said he would boil him in oil if he laughed at a Japanese again.

I don't know whether this head injury affected his mind, but English was never the same man again. He kept on repeating that the Japs were going to boil him in oil, and all my attempts to get this idea out of his head failed completely. He went downhill very rapidly and had to go to the base hospital at Tarsau when we moved up country; there he lost the will to live, contracted dysentery and died.

I had another similar case not long afterwards, and once again it was a Gordon Highlander, a C.S.M. and a big burly chap. His malaria failed to respond to the Japanese quinine, which when examined closely turned out to have been sabotaged at source and to consist largely of tapioca; so I put him on atebirin. This is a good drug for malaria but with a few patients it has unfortunate side-effects, causing varying degrees of temporary excitement. This C.S.M. turned out to be one of those susceptible: he jumped out of his hospital bed, picked up a shovel, shouted that he was going to kill the little yellow bastards, and set off towards the guard room swinging his shovel left and right. Everybody crowded round to restrain him, but he had the strength of a bull; only when

I got the morphia into his arm did he stop roaring out at the top of his voice an ambition with which we were all in full agreement. I gave him the same dose as had knocked English for six a few days previously, but this tough Scot seemed to be a match for any amount of morphia; he needed a second dose before I dared tell the men holding him to let go, and even then he kept on muttering all night, while two tough buddies of his stood by to restrain him if necessary. If he had got at the Japs they would certainly have liquidated him, but I feel sure he would have killed half a dozen first. He was better next morning: I had of course stopped giving him atebirin. Now he asked for paper and pencil so that he could write down his complaints for me to take to the Japs. One of his buddies stole some lavatory paper and this C.S.M. wrote laboriously on numerous sheets of it. When I came to see what he had written, it was all nonsense: although I am sure it expressed our feelings very accurately. So I pretended to read it all over and said I agreed entirely and would add my own notes and then submit it to the Japs. A few days later the C.S.M. was quite well again and could not remember a thing.

The worst of the acute and dangerous diseases which we were faced with, apart from cholera, was malignant tertian malaria with its cerebral complications. From this time on we were faced with cases of this sort almost every day. Patients were being brought in with temperatures of 105° to 107° , and unless the proper diagnosis was made and the proper treatment given at once, the patient would sink into delirium and then into a coma, and his temperature would rise to 110° : after this there was no hope of recovery as his brain was literally cooked. The important thing therefore was to keep the tempera-

ture down. We took it rectally as soon as the patient arrived in hospital, and if it was 105° or more he would be put on the ground naked, fanned, and soused continually in cold water. Meanwhile, quinine well diluted in saline was slowly injected intravenously. This procedure was not devoid of danger, as it could lead to sudden heart failure, but it was the only life-saving technique we had.

Patients who recovered from severe cerebral malaria had, in general, no recollection of what had happened; but this loss of memory was only temporary, and as a rule recovery was complete.

It was impossible to cope with malaria and its complications properly. At first we never had sufficient quinine; later on, and until our rice-store raid, atebrin had to be kept only for emergencies. Many men refused to take quinine either for prevention or cure: we often found the pills they were supposed to have taken hidden under their rice-sack pillows after they had died. We were always on the move and always at work, and never got a chance to oil the breeding grounds of mosquitos: the men had no clothing to speak of and certainly no mosquito nets.

Eventually the railway line reached Wampo North. We had been working against our will and in the interests of the Japanese, our enemies; but it was impossible not to feel a certain pride and excitement at the completion of our work. So there we stood one morning, very early, straining our eyes and peering down the line, waiting until eventually the first train to pass over our own railway emerged from the mist and rattled by in a cloud of steam.

Our work at Wampo was done, and the Japs told us that at the end of April 1943 all the men there were to be

moved up country. 'D' Battalion was the last to leave: our destination was Tonchan South, ten miles to the north of Tarsau. This meant another forced march of about twenty-five miles; as before we had to carry all our kit and cooking utensils, and we arrived dead beat after twenty hours.

At first this march followed the railway tracks, and then we left them behind and marched over ground which had been levelled and prepared for them. Further north there were wooden bridges to be crossed: these had been built out of tree trunks, across a number of deep ravines, and it felt very unsafe and alarming to walk across them. They had been built in a crude and clumsy fashion from jungle trees, and the men who built them had taken every opportunity for sabotage: spikes and bolts were put in in the wrong places or left loose, so that when in due course the Japs started to send heavy goods trains over these bridges, many of them collapsed, sometimes causing the locomotive to explode at the bottom of a deep ravine.

When we arrived at Tonchan South we found that the camp already held three thousand P.O.W.s. Another camp had been built to house the labour force which the Japanese had impressed from among the Asian population: there were three thousand of these unfortunate people also, and both the two camps, theirs and ours, occupied less than half a square mile between them. These Chinese, Malays, Indians and Eurasians were in a far worse situation than ours: they had no doctors or medicines and no leaders of any sort, no record was kept of their names and whereabouts, they were fed occasionally when the Japs felt like it, and they were totally ignorant of sanitation. The whole situation was ripe for an epidemic.

I felt very disturbed, but as far as 'D' Battalion was concerned, things could have been worse. Before we left Wampo I had lectured the men on cholera precautions, and they had a natural advantage in that their average age was thirty-seven, with eleven years' residence in the Far East. This meant that they were completely acclimatized to a tropical environment, they had a certain sense of responsibility and could be relied on to carry out medical instructions given for their own good, and in most cases they were married and had something to live for. Many other units in Siam were made up chiefly of young men without these advantages, and their survival rate was much lower: a fact which came home to one poignantly when one inspected the rough inscriptions in the various jungle cemeteries.

The Japanese Camp Commandant at Tonchan South was Staff-Sergeant Hiramatsu, a man of few words, tough, rough and brutal: they called him Tiger. But he did have a sense of justice, and the ruthless discipline which he imposed was as bad for the Jap guards as it was for us. We were all afraid of him.

The day after we arrived at Tonchan South he sent for me and for the P.O.W. camp interpreter, who warned me that the Tiger knew English and that I should be careful what I said. Apparently it was beneath the great man's dignity to speak the captives' language or admit that he understood it.

I came into the Tiger's hut and he barked out at me through the interpreter, 'You are the new doctor!' I felt like a new boy at school and I nearly answered, 'Yes sir'; but I remembered that I was dealing with a bully and I looked him straight in the face and said, 'That is so'. He looked me up and down and paused and thought a little,

and then asked me in a slightly different tone why there was so much sickness amongst us prisoners.

There was plenty to say in reply to that one: I gave him the obvious elementary answers, and pointed out that the conditions we had been living under made sickness inevitable. Men fed on such a poor and defective diet, overworked to the point of collapse, and compelled to do without proper sanitation were not likely to be pictures of health. I ended up by saying, 'I am proud of "D" Battalion: they want to work, and I will keep them fit, but you must help me'.

Tiger glared at me for a long time: I could see that he was angry and I wondered if I had gone too far. But eventually he smiled in a cunning way and explained to me that the sickness was caused by our men being lazy, sleeping on the wet ground and without shirts to protect them from mosquito bites. Controlling my temper as well as I could I pointed out the various fallacies in this statement of the situation, and I explained that malaria was a menace even in the best conditions: I had always taken proper precautions in the tropics, I explained, but I had still caught malaria.

This made Tiger laugh immoderately, and he advanced what seemed to him a tremendously witty suggestion that if I, a doctor, had caught malaria, it must have been in consequence of taking girls into the jungle at night. I pretended to share his amusement at this brilliant joke and laughed loudly, and the interpreter did so too: the atmosphere relaxed and I realized that Tiger and I understood each other. When he stopped laughing he asked me in a business-like way what I needed to ensure my men's health and ability to work. At once, before he had time to change his mind, I made my terms: 26 ounces

of uncooked rice per man every day, one cow or buffalo and six large baskets of mixed vegetables every other day, adequate amounts of tea and sugar, and half a day's rest every week. This half holiday was needly very urgently: the men were still sleeping on the ground and had no time to wash what few garments they had. The Tiger thought this over and then agreed, but in a quiet, threatening way: he expected results.

I felt very pleased at this diplomatic success, although I had some difficulty at first in making our people believe what I said had happened: it sounded too good to be true. But Staff-Sergeant Hiramatsu was a man of his word.

Three days later he sent for me again: I arrived with the interpreter, very puzzled, and found Tiger lying on the floor under a blanket, obviously in the throes of a malarial attack. He produced an ampoule of quinine, pointed to a saucepan in which a hypodermic needle had been boiled, and told me to give him an intravenous injection.

The situation had its humorous side, and I could not resist turning to the interpreter and saying, 'Ask him if he has been taking a girl into the jungle'. The interpreter did not have time to translate a word: Tiger roared 'Kurrah!' at the top of his voice and grabbed furiously at a sword by his bedside. But he controlled himself and smiled through his shivers and asked me to be less comic and to get on with the injection. I did so, and he was up next day.

We now heard that cholera had broken out at a place called Takanun, which was less than one hundred miles from us up the river. This was very serious news; 'D'

Battalion had all been inoculated against cholera and I had lectured on the subject, but there were now so many men crowded together in such a small area that an outbreak of cholera could wipe us all out in a matter of days.

Cholera is usually endemic in parts of Siam during the dry season; you catch it by drinking contaminated water from a river or shallow well, or by eating food which has been handled by someone suffering from cholera or carrying it. There have been vast epidemics at various periods of history: Thucydides refers to it in the fifth century B.C., while in modern India there were eight million cholera deaths between 1904 and 1924. I had never seen a case, but I was almost obsessed by the fear of it: the section of my textbook on tropical diseases which dealt with cholera was the only part of that book which escaped being used as cigarette paper.

Now this terrifying thing was at work and near us; I gave further and more urgent lectures, and insisted that full precautions were to be rigorously observed. Only boiled water was to be used for drinking or for cleaning the teeth, bathing in the river was to stop absolutely, eating utensils were to be dipped in boiling water before use, any food touched by flies or ants was to be thrown away, and each man had to take great care to keep his hands away from his mouth. One additional warning I gave, which was that paper used for making cigarettes should not be licked: the men used any old scrap of dirty paper for this purpose.

In practice these rules could not be enforced as strictly as one would wish, and of course they were wholly ignored in the Asian camp next door.

On the morning of 8th June, 1943, Vincent Bennett,

the M.O. of 'F' Battalion, sent a message to my tent asking if I could come over at once to see one of his men who was very ill. At the time it was raining heavily, and as I left the partial shelter of my leaky tent the cold rain sloshed over my body and soaked my loin cloth, so that by the time I reached the hospital I felt as if I had a wet nappy on.

The man was lying on bamboo slats looking extremely ill, very pale and with a drawn anxious expression on his waxen face. His nose had a pinched appearance and his eyes were sunken; his finger tips were crinkled like a washerwoman's, his skin was cold and clammy, and his temperature below normal.

I asked him several questions. In a barely audible whisper, he told me that he had been vomiting and passing large quantities of stools like barley water, and that he was now getting excruciating pains in his calf muscles. I told him not to worry, and made various vague and sadly dishonest promises of healing medicines.

Vincent and I walked away and as soon as we were out of ear shot I turned to him and said, 'Christ, it's caught up with us, Vincent! There is no doubt, that's cholera!'

'I know Pay, it's a textbook case.' It was a great shock and we felt very bitter: one would think we had suffered enough.

We returned to the hospital and gave the man a shot of morphia, since by this time the cramps in his legs were making him scream out in agony. The cholera poisons make the muscles contract suddenly and so violently that individual muscle fibres actually snap: the pain of it is almost unendurable.

Then Vincent and I went to tell Tiger what had happened. It took him a moment or two to realize the full

implications of what we had said: then he started to shout and rave like a lunatic, as if it had been our fault. Eventually he calmed down, and we told him that we must at once clear a small area in the jungle, not far from the camp, to serve as a cholera compound for this case and the others which were bound to occur. This sent Tiger raving again and he screamed that the man had to be sent at once to the Base Hospital at Tarsau. We replied that under no circumstances was the man to leave Tonchan South, as to move him would only spread the disease. Finding his will opposed, Tiger went very red in the face, pulled his sword out and brandished it in front of us screaming, 'It is an order of the Imperial Japanese Army that the man be moved to Tarsau!'

I thought that a more conciliatory tone might help, so I said: 'It shall be done as you say; since there is a Japanese doctor at Tarsau, why not 'phone him first? If this man goes to Tarsau and spreads the disease there, your doctor will make trouble for all of us.' Tiger picked up the telephone with a grunt and started jabbering in Japanese, and after a while he turned to us and said, 'Japanese doctor now come — you take man to jungle.'

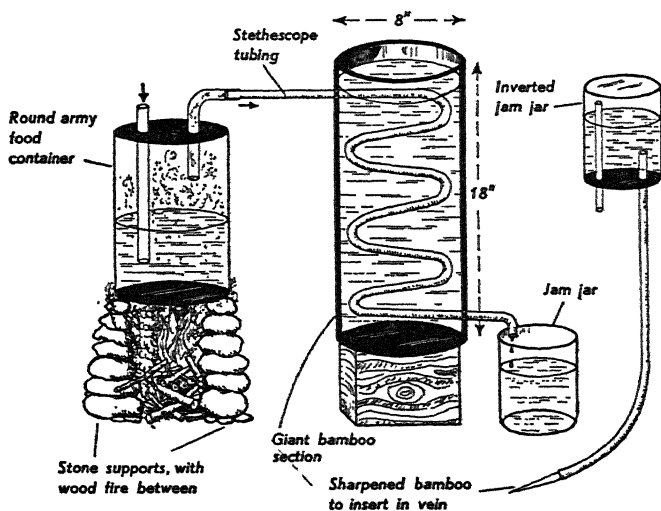
So off we went and arranged for a working party to go and make a clearing in the jungle, a quarter of a mile from the camp. Here we rigged up a tent provided by the Japs; it was full of holes where the canvas had rotted. We put the patient inside, but we could do nothing for him except for an injection of morphia to ease the pain and a drink of water which he immediately vomited.

Before the afternoon was over, we had packed ten more cases inside that small tent; and our first patient had died.

We felt uneasy about burying him, since the ground

sloped slightly and rain water might soak through the earth and contaminate the river. So we made an attempt to burn the body, using jungle vegetation to build a funeral pyre: after several attempts we managed to get the green wood alight, but the cremation was not a success, and eventually we had to bury the body in a deep grave only partially charred.

The epidemic which now started did not take me wholly by surprise: I had given the men of 'D' Battalion a shot of cholera vaccine before we left Wampo, and I had also worked out plans for making a water distillation plant. I now put these plans into practice: the apparatus which resulted looked rather crude, being made up from an army-type food container, old stethoscopes, and bamboo; but it worked.



The distilled water was required to form the basis of a saline solution to be administered intravenously. The treatment of cholera is aimed in general at the immediate

replacement of body fluids lost by vomiting and diarrhoea, so that the body never becomes dehydrated but remains able to function. I managed to save many lives in this way, pouring anything up to eight or ten pints of my saline solution into the patients' veins every twenty-four hours. But there were various dangerous complications: muscular cramps and, more seriously, complete kidney failure or beri-beri. Both of these very often proved fatal. One curious feature of the epidemic which I noticed was that a man liable to attacks of malaria would find them cured on his recovery from cholera: as if the cholera germs had destroyed their malarial colleagues.

As well as salines, we used M. and B. 693 tablets. If given early enough, before the pernicious vomiting started, this made the disease much milder or enabled the patient to by-pass it altogether.

Even so, we had two hundred cases within two days from our diagnosis of the first. The Japanese flatly refused to give us extra tents, and matters were made worse by the fact that many of the Asians in the camp next door panicked and fled into the jungle. Their only possible route was by the river and its tributaries, and so in a very short time these men contrived to contaminate every available source of water supply. Later on, our working parties found their bodies in the jungle.

In an attempt to control this situation, the Japanese ordered that any of those Asians who remained in their camp were to be admitted to our compound if they developed cholera. Our men had been given tents for sleeping in, but many of them handed these over to the cholera compound so that the patients could have some protection from the tropical sun and rain.

The Japs made several other regulations in the hope of keeping this epidemic within limits, but as usual they showed more zeal for discipline than common sense. We doctors were not allowed to live in the compound, but every evening we had to return to our own lines, although we pointed out repeatedly that this moving backwards and forwards would spread the disease. Any movement between the main camp and the cholera compound was absolutely forbidden during the hours of darkness: this meant that any man who developed cholera in the night had to wait until daybreak before he could be admitted. We asked for soap or lysol to clean our contaminated hands and feet, but it was refused: we did what we could with wood-ash and hot water.

The men were now dying at such a rate that I persuaded Tiger to let me have a working party to dig a communal grave. This was granted and we dug a pit, 20 feet long, 10 feet wide, and 20 feet deep; we used jungle vines as ropes, to hoist the earth and the workers out of the pit.

The men were thrown into the pit as soon as they died; and every evening, before leaving the compound, the doctors and orderlies together used to shovel a thin layer of earth over the swollen and distorted bodies.

When a new patient was admitted we placed him on the ground and started to administer intravenous salines at once. This was often difficult, since his veins had usually collapsed as a result of dehydration caused by copious vomiting and diarrhoea. We could not locate a vein with our finger tips: we had to cut the skin in an approximate fashion where we knew there ought to be a vein, and then patiently to dissect the tissues around the vein until it was exposed. The best vein for this purpose was the one on the inner aspect of the foot, just above the ankle

bone. Once the vein was located a linen thread was passed under it and it was eased clear of the wound; a hollow bamboo needle was pushed into the vein and tied with the thread, and then connected by means of a rubber tube to the saline bottle. We had two dozen such bottles, glass jam-jars or Japanese beer bottles, and they were all in constant use. The operation was carried out without any local anaesthetic, since none was available; but fortunately the shocked and collapsed condition of the patients was as good as an anaesthetic. The thickened blood inside their veins looked like black treacle and flowed slowly.

I made a second distilling plant, using a four-gallon tin; but even so I could not keep pace with the demand, and in desperation we started using rain water, which has after all been distilled naturally. We boiled the water before using it, and there were remarkably few reactions, though some of the patients shivered all over, as though they were suffering from a malarial attack.

One of the worst things about cholera was the painfulness of the muscle cramps; we gave morphia when we could, but there was not nearly enough to go round, and from the compound there arose continually, therefore, a faint desperate moaning which was terrible to hear, punctuated at intervals by appalling shrieks as some unfortunate's muscles snapped.

The compound was hellish in every way. The stench from the burial pit was everywhere. When one approached the pit to use it one saw bubbling millions of maggots. The cholera victims from the Asian camp had no doctors or orderlies to look after them, and the Japanese made no provision at all for them to have food or water. They were just dumped in our camp to lie on

the ground in the open until they died or were taken by us into a tent. We did what we could to alleviate their sufferings; when some of our own cholera cases recovered, they volunteered to stay in the compound and help.

Twice a day a Japanese medical orderly entered the compound, dressed like a surgeon about to operate: white coat, gum boots, rubber gloves and a mask. But he had not come to help — only to set our orderlies to work dragging to the pit those patients who he suspected were dead. Cholera sometimes gives the patient a corpse-like appearance, and there is no means of telling how many men were dumped into the pit, raising a vast protesting cloud of angry flies, while still alive. Once I saw an Asian sit up just before he was pushed in: a look of horror came on his face and he roared out that he was not dead. Before I could intervene the Jap killed him with a shovel.

We could not keep the bodies too long before burial because of the ants; I usually tried to wait a few hours before burial, just to make sure, and in doubtful cases I cut the man's wrist with a razor blade. Flowing blood would show that he was alive, and could then be stopped by artery forceps.

In describing these days, I may have given an impression of callousness, as though I and the other doctors were past feeling and suffering the situation. In a sense our emotions were anaesthetized: we could not have remained sane otherwise. But then and for a long time afterwards we were liable to find memory reasserting itself at night-time, and to wake up screaming from the black depths of nightmare: this still happens to me from time to time, and once again I see the jungle, the rain,

and my friends turning liquid in a pit of flies and maggots.

When I left the compound in the evening, I used to go back to a little tent in the main camp, which I shared with five other officers. On one side of me Bob Lucas slept, and on the other was Captain T. E. Abrams, R.A., known to us all as A.B. He and I were good friends and I shared his blanket.

I remember how he came with me one day to Tonchan main camp; I wanted to get some more rubber and glass tubing for our distillation plant, and he came too, walking the weary twelve miles there and back simply so that I could have someone to talk to. We came to a place where the ground was covered with small brown pebbles such as are used for drives and garden paths in England, and A.B. said to me, 'Look Pav: these pebbles remind me of the path leading to my house. Let's rest here for a bit.' We sat down and chatted about our homes, idly picking up these pebbles and flinging them in the jungle, listening to the rustling of the leaves as various birds and reptiles moved away from this bombardment. This episode and these thoughts of home came back to me a few days later, when A.B. woke me up in the middle of the night with agitated whispers. I groped for his hand instinctively: it was cold and clammy, and I could feel the ridges on his finger tips. Very sadly, because I knew what had happened, I said to him, 'Tell me, A.B., where have you been shitting?' He answered in a whisper, 'Just by the tree outside the tent.' I lit a candle: it was four in the morning. By the flickering candle light I could see that his eyes had sunk into their orbits and his skin had become pale and waxy. 'Listen, A.B., you are not to worry,' I

said, 'It is a good job we have caught it early — here, take these tablets.' But only with great difficulty could he swallow the four M. and B. 693 tablets which I gave him. I woke up the other people in the tent and at frequent intervals we carried poor A.B. outside by the tree where he vomited and passed large watery stools. There was not much more we could do till daybreak. After a while, he started complaining of pain in his calf muscles: I boiled a morphia tablet in a spoon with a little water over a candle flame, sucked the liquid into a syringe, and injected it. This relieved the pain, just for a while.

Dawn came at last. I examined his stools: they had a typical cholera appearance. I organized a carrying party and we took A.B. along to the cholera compound on a stretcher made from two sacks and a couple of bamboo poles. Then before following on, I gave instructions that the tent was to be moved and a fire built where it had stood, and also by the tree, in order to disinfect the ground; already the ants were everywhere, and I strongly suspected them of helping to spread the cholera germ, although I have never seen this in a textbook.

Luckily, several bottles of saline were already sterilized and ready: I warmed them to body temperature and dissected my way down to a vein in A.B.'s right foot. I got several pints of saline into him at once, and more later in the day: his cramps were severe and he had to be given morphia. Sometime he was delirious; but once he took my hands in a tight grip and said in a barely audible whisper, 'Pav, write to my wife, tell her I love her'. Soon afterwards, he sank into a coma and died, it was 5 p.m.

I had not the heart to throw his body into the common pit, since we had lived as brothers, sharing what little we had. So I took a shovel and dug a deep grave by a jungle

tree, and his men in the lines afterwards erected a rough wooden cross there with his name inscribed with a red-hot iron.

His death was a blow to us: he was a most likeable fellow, always cheerful and with the great gift of being able to encourage the men and build up their resolution, even when things were at their worst. I inherited his blanket, but missed his kicks and snores in the night.

Now the rest of us in the tent wondered who would be the next: rather foolishly, we had been in the habit of eating and drinking out of each other's utensils. I think from the way they looked at me that I was the favourite. Soon they all came to me and reported diarrhoea, brought on perhaps by their fear of cholera. I had to report it to myself. But the sixth day passed, the incubation period was over, and we all breathed a sigh of relief.

Eventually, after repeated requests, the Japs gave us some cholera vaccine. Everybody queued up for his shot very eagerly, but the immediate sequel was a marked increase in the incidence of the disease. I do not know whether this was cause and effect: when later batches of Japanese vaccine came I boiled them, and no increase in the number of cholera cases followed. The textbooks say that the maximum period of effective immunity after this inoculation is six months, but this seems to be belied by the fact that the Dutch P.O.W.s, who had all received the inoculation well over a year previously, were much less liable to the disease than we were.

On 26th June, 1943, Tiger gave me permission to visit Tarsau ten miles away, to see whether I could get some more rubber and glass tubing for our distillation plant. This apparatus worked day and night now, which enabled us to find plenty of saline sterilized and ready for use when

we came to the compound in the morning. But the rubber tubing was starting to perish because of the heat.

I went by myself, taking with me a pass in Japanese characters which Tiger had provided in case I should be stopped. He told me to be back by nightfall. I set off in the early morning along a narrow track, carrying a bamboo cane and making a loud noise so as to frighten away snakes and wild animals. Wild life was very plentiful in the Siamese jungle: at night we could hear elephants fooling around quite near the camp, which made the Japanese get nervous and start banging away with their rifles; tigers had been reported and sometimes we smelt them. Large committees of baboons used to hang around our camp quite often, eyeing us in a disapproving way.

The last time I had been out on this errand, A.B. had been with me, and now he was dead: it was hard to believe, and very sad.

After walking several hours, I saw a column of men marching towards me. As they approached I began to feel that there was something familiar about the man who was leading the column. 'Dr. Livingstone, I presume?' — it was Lt.-Col. Newey, the C.O. of my wartime Battalion, the 1st S.S.V.F. We had parted a year previously at Changi, and here we were meeting by chance in the middle of a Siamese jungle.

The Jap guard in charge of this party allowed me to talk to them for a while. They were mostly Malayan Volunteers, part of an outfit which the Japanese had designated as 'H' Force. They had just come from Singapore; the Japs had told our administration at Changi that they were forming two units, 'F' Force and 'H' Force, and that all the sick men in Changi who were able

to walk should be included in these parties, since they were to be sent to a hill station where it was very healthy, with excellent food and first-class hospitals. The camp authorities had no alternative to accepting this lie; in fact, no arrangements had been made to feed these men at all. During the subsequent few weeks we quite often saw parties of these men from 'F' Force and 'H' Force on their way through Tonchan South: they appeared to be very near starvation, and we gave them what food we could. Now when I told them that they were walking straight into a cholera area, they were completely shattered by the news; they were quite plainly in no state to cope with any epidemic. In fact, the mortality among the men of these two units was extraordinarily high; they had suffered much more than we had.

I left them, and continued my march to Tarsau. The Jap medical officer there gave me the glass and rubber tubing I had come for, and after talking to various friends I set out on my weary and lonely walk home, moving fast, since starvation had made me night-blind and I was afraid of getting lost. The Japs had given me written permission to carry a walking stick at night, and I was to produce this if a Jap guard questioned my being in possession of what they classed as a dangerous weapon. Usually the guards clouted first, before I could produce the document out of my G-string. Even with the stick I was very liable to fall into holes and bump into trees.

This time I was lucky and got back to camp well before sunset. My friends of 'H' Force were there trying to find shelter and scrounging around for food, which we provided as well as we could.

That evening when I held my usual sick parade, many of the Malayan Volunteers of 'H' Force came along so

that I could do something about their blisters and especially their tropical ulcers. These tended to start in consequence of a bamboo scratch or a blistered foot; at the best they were slow to heal, and unless they were treated at once they increased rapidly in size, spreading and eating up the tissues very deeply until even the bone was affected and started to disintegrate. Then secondary infection set in, accompanied by a sickening smell. The doctors of 'H' Force had practically no medicines with them; they tried various ways of treating these tropical ulcers such as scraping them clean without any anaesthetic, the patient being held down meanwhile, or the deliberate placing of live maggots in the ulcer so that they would eat it clean. This form of treatment originated during the First World War; severely wounded men who had to lie out on the battle field for several days before they could be rescued often had wounds which were seething with maggots, but nonetheless incredibly clean and free from any tendency to go gangrenous.

Following this theory, some of the P.O.W. doctors started putting live maggots into ulcers. This form of treatment would probably have been excellent for fit and well-fed men, but I did not approve of it for anyone in our physical and psychological condition: the sight of a bubbling mass of big fat maggots crawling in and out of even the strongest-minded P.O.W.'s ulcer would be enough to send him round the bend.

Instead, I used the 'permanent ulcer dressing', as developed during the Spanish Civil War for the treatment of compound fractures. The Spanish doctors used to encase the shattered limb in plaster of paris and leave it to stew for several weeks in its own pus; when the plaster was removed the fracture was seen to be joined

and the wound healed. So now with these ulcers: I cleaned them as well as I could and applied a little iodoform or M. and B. 693, and then slapped on elastoplast, covering this with bandages made from old sheets or banana tree bark.

After three weeks the ulcers had vanished completely unless they had been very big, and even then we saw healthy granulation tissue and the process of healing completed itself soon afterwards.

I treated a great many tropical ulcers in this way and no amputations resulted, except in the case of one Vulture who insisted on being evacuated down-river against my advice. If he had done as he was told, he would have kept his leg.

Chapter Five

WE made our next move in comparative luxury, going up the river in barges towed by pom-poms. The Japs had decreed that five hundred and fifty men had to be moved from Tonchan South to a notorious camp at a place called Kayu. As at Wampo South, the job consisted of hacking a path for the railway out of solid rock; the place was nicknamed Hell-Fire Corner because of the incessant noise of blasting operations which went on there.

Of all the men at Tonchan South 'D' Battalion were undoubtedly the healthiest, so we provided four hundred and fifty towards this detachment and 'F' Battalion made up the remainder. The joy of this move was heightened when we heard that cholera had broken out in the Kayu area; it was partly because of my experience with this disease, and partly because most of the Vultures were going, that I was sent to Kayu No. 3 camp as M.O. of this party.

Our trip up the river, travelling in comfort with breath-takingly beautiful scenery all round us, contrasted very sharply with the filth and stink of Tonchan South. But our respite was short; all too soon the barges were pulled in towards the right bank and we saw in the distance what looked like a big cattle pen. It was made of bamboo poles, and as we drew nearer we could see in it something like five hundred men; living skeletons rather, almost naked and barely capable of moving. We were told

that they were waiting to be evacuated to a base hospital down the river.

We disembarked, regretfully. The men in the cage became aware of our presence and dragged themselves painfully to the fences to have a look; some of them called out, apparently recognizing friends among us, but their condition was such that we could not possibly identify individuals.

It turned out that the Japanese had been delaying the evacuation of these men to a base hospital for several weeks, in the hope that more of them would die. They had been given practically no food at all, and I could see that the compound was full of beri-beri, malaria, pellagra, dysentery, and great stinking ulcers.

These men had come from Kayu No. 1 and No. 2 camps, which were about two hundred yards from where we disembarked. During the previous three months they had averaged well over twenty-five deaths a week.

To reach Kayu No. 3 camp, which was our destination, we had to climb six hundred feet along a very narrow and muddy track which went up a steep hillside. We were carrying all our gear, including tents and cooking utensils. At the summit a fresh batch of Jap guards were waiting for us; they herded us savagely along, lashing out viciously with bamboo sticks at our backs and legs, roaring and screaming at us. We were to camp down on a slope not far from where the rock-cutting was taking place. The jungle had not been cleared, and now in the torrential rain we had to hack away the thick undergrowth before our tents could be erected. At long last, well after midnight, utterly exhausted, soaked to the skin and unfed, we lay down on the wet muddy ground to fall asleep.

Next morning I inspected the area and was appalled. The water supply upon which we were to depend was derived from one source only, a shallow stream, which followed a course that might have been chosen deliberately to make sure that everybody caught cholera. This stream, which was nowhere deeper than two inches, flowed first of all through a camp where five hundred men, part of 'H' Force, had already had two hundred and twenty cholera deaths; then it flowed through, and supplied, another camp holding some two thousand conscript Asian labourers, who had lost half their number already from cholera. The path of the stream continued from there alongside a track, where it was used as a watering place, and inevitably as a lavatory too, by elephants; then it entered the original Kayu No. 3 camp, where thirty-five men out of five hundred had already died from cholera. This camp had a small cholera compound on the opposite side of the stream, so that anyone entering or leaving the compound had to paddle through the stream with heavily contaminated feet, the Japanese having strictly forbidden the building of a bridge. After that, the stream passed through a small camp of three hundred Australians under Captain Westbrook and from there through Major Lee's camp of five hundred Gordon Highlanders. Finally, the stream supplied the five hundred and fifty men in our camp.

Our immediate neighbours, Major Lee's party, had apparently only arrived two days before. They had no doctor with them, so I took over, and was horrified to find that the men had received no instructions on cholera precautions. I gave them a blunt talk at once: 'It is entirely up to you men whether you live or commit suicide. If you want to live, you will do as I say; if you

want to die all you have to do is to drink some unboiled water.' And so on, very emphatically.

But the next day cholera broke out among them. Those affected were taken to a compound, to be looked after by me.

So far, the doctors in this area had not been able to give intravenous salines, since they had no distillation equipment. When we left Tonchan South I brought with me the original small apparatus which I had made, leaving the larger one behind; the day after we arrived at Hell-Fire Corner I lent the small one to an Australian doctor, Captain Parker, known to his men as Painless Parker on account of his erroneous belief that he could extract teeth painlessly.

The horrible conditions at Kayu were apparently due to the fact that the railway was behind schedule: it had to be finished by the end of the year, and we were already in July. So the old 'Speedo' technique was used on us once again; everything was done at the double, no half-day rest periods were allowed, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that we could get even the most seriously sick men excused from murderously hard work. But we were very pleased to find that we were to work under Lieutenant Hattori, who had been our Camp Commandant at Wampo, showing himself more human than most of the Japs; he went out of his way now to do things for us and especially to help the sick in various ways, but it was quite beyond his powers to ease the appalling pressure under which we lived and worked, and which made my sick parades at this time so hectic.

Now, years later and half a world away, it is hard to imagine, or even — except in occasional nightmares — to remember the peculiar flavour of those days. To anyone

who has ever been in the army, terms like 'reveille' and 'sick parade' conjure up familiar pictures of a disciplined and regimental kind, very unlike the realities of life at Kayu.

Imagine us awakened at four in the morning by savage screams of *tenku, tenku*, as a Jap goes round literally knocking us up. We stagger feebly up from our rice-sacks and their attendant hoards of bugs and lice, and we fall in line to pick up our breakfast — a cup of boiled rice and a mug of cholera germs going by the name of tea.

Imagine the oppressive, steamy darkness of a Siamese jungle in the early morning: thin shadows moving about indistinctly, muttering and cursing; everywhere, the squalid noise of great preoccupation with bowels.

Then a little later, in the first morning light, the shadows resolve themselves into men; it seems that the whole camp is queueing up for my sick parade.

'First, please — now what's wrong with you?' A silly question; even in this faint light I can see that the poor bastard is shivering in the throes of a malarial attack. 'Right, take his name, one day bed-down, and mind you take the bloody quinine. Next! Well what is it?'

'Sir, I have got a swollen foreskin.'

'Let's have a look at it': sure enough a big, fat, bloody bug has attached itself to the man's foreskin. If I pull it off, the jaws will be left in and the place will go septic: I put a piece of kapok over the bloated bug and anaesthetize it with a drop of chloroform, so that it relaxes happily and lets go, and the man is left with a swollen willy which will soon subside to normal proportions unless it does turn septic. 'Hurry up: next, please!'

'Can I have a day off, sir? — I am not sick, but I

promised Jones and Roberts in the cholera compound I'd do some washing for them, also, sir, I have a few odd jobs to do for myself.'

'Right, wait on one side, and if there aren't too many bed-downs you can have the day off. Next — hallo, what's wrong with you?'

'I have been having wet dreams, sir, and I'm worried — they're making me weak.'

'Oh, you have, have you? Listen, Smith, nobody else gets wet dreams nowadays; you work in the cookhouse, don't you? Good God, look at you, man — you're fatter than most of us; why — because you are stealing the bloody rations, that's why, so stop stealing the bloody rations and your wet dreams will disappear like magic! Now, please, get the hell out of here!' Then to Pinky Riley: 'Wet dreams, indeed! I don't even remember what a wet dream is like. Next!'

'Sir, it's Lance-Corporal Taylor, I'm worried about him. He has been vomiting all night and he's got the shits, but he won't go sick, sir, he says that there are other people worse than he is.'

'Tell him to report to me at once. Next, please! . . . what, not you again? Well, what is it this time? . . . ah, so you've sprained your ankle, have you? Let's have a look at it: h'm, no fracture, no swelling, good, good: now, Hill, keep on exercising it. And, Hill, you won't report sick tomorrow with a broken neck, now will you? Next. . . Now, Taylor, when did this start? . . . M'm, now listen, laddie, you are going to the hospital.'

'But, sir, I can work. . . .'

'Sorry to have to tell you this, Taylor, but I'm afraid you've got a mild attack of cholera; now don't worry. Pinky, take him in and tell Captain Parker I want three

bottles of saline as soon as possible. Next. . . . Next. . . . Next. . . .’

And so it went on at all hours of the day and night, while I got more and more worried at the enormous numbers of men reporting sick. The Japanese threatened that unless the numbers could be reduced they would carry out the sick parades themselves, which meant that they would empty the hospitals and simply make the men work until they died of exhaustion: I had heard of this happening in other camps. I had no doubt at all that some of our own men were swinging the lead, and I appealed to them not to make things more difficult for those who were really ill, but in vain. Lieutenant Hattori spoke to me, with many apologies and much sucking in of his breath, and warned me that the railway engineers threatened drastic action unless more men were sent out to work. There would be nothing he could do to stop this: I must rack my brains and find some way of sorting out the genuine cases.

There was only one solution, and I hated to adopt it. I asked Lieutenant Hattori to let me have three tents and a working party to erect a barbed wire fence round them. He asked no questions, presumably wishing to spare me the embarrassment and loss of face which would be entailed by any admission on my part that some of our men were malingering.

I had established it as a general practice that men queueing up to report sick with dysentery or diarrhoea should bring with them samples of their stools carried in large leaves or sections of hollow bamboo; I had no microscope, but I could form a fairly good opinion at a glance as to whether it was just plain diarrhoea or bacillary or amoebic dysentery.

Now I began to form a very definite suspicion that I was being shown the same specimens repeatedly by different men attending the same sick parade. This was soon confirmed, and in fact I found that a brisk trade was going on, some evil characters being prepared to sell amoebic or bacillary stools to men who did not want to work, in return for a few cigarettes or a little money.

Bearing these facts in mind, I was able to reassure Hattori that with these tents and the fence I could considerably reduce the number of sick men. Meanwhile, everyone speculated about their purpose. Some said that they were to hold captured R.A.F. air crews pending interrogation: it was quite reasonable to suppose that the Japs would not want us to talk with such prisoners and discover how well the war was going for us.

Soon my tents stood ready in their barbed wire enclosure. The next time sick parade was held, some three hundred men lined up in a matter of seconds, as usual; but each one who complained of dysentery was taken inside the barbed wire and told that he would be put on a fluid diet until he produced a stool in the bedpan in the presence of Pinky or myself. Ninety were admitted to the enclosure that morning: seventeen of them produced genuine dysenteric stools, forty-six laid beautiful doughnuts, and the remainder changed their tune and swore they were constipated.

Those who had been suffering so grievously from pendulosis plumbi called me a collaborator with the Japs; but I had succeeded in protecting the interests of the genuinely sick, and Lieutenant Hattori was so pleased that he let me keep the tents to serve as hospital accommodation, and equipped them with a supply of condensed milk into the bargain.

We were only in the Kayu area for three weeks, during which we had among our five hundred and fifty men seven cholera cases, of which two died, and two hundred and fifty serious cases of various other diseases. Major Lee's party had suffered similarly; they were now moved to Kayu No. 1 camp, where there were hospitals and doctors but no medicines.

The more or less fit men in 'D' and 'F' Battalions were sent, at the end of these three weeks at Kayu, to a place called Hintock further up the line for more work. I was sent back to Tonchan to look after our heavy sick and to see what could be done about evacuating the worst cases to the base hospital down the river.

Once again, I travelled by barge; I noticed on the way that the compound which had contained five hundred living skeletons was now empty, and I wondered what had happened to those men.

Back at Tonchan I found Tiger in charge, and transformed — perhaps by pressure from above — into an even more vicious Tiger than before. Up to a point I could see what lay behind his behaviour: he was essentially a soldier and a strict disciplinarian, and the way certain P.O.W.s carried on at Tonchan main camp was enough to irritate and provoke any kind of ruler or administrator. This camp contained one of the biggest and most shameless Jack Clubs I have ever had the misfortune to come across: compared to Tonchan, Changi was all sweet generosity. The place was full of officers who sat around on their fat behinds and did nothing either for the men or for the hygiene and decency of the camp; they played bridge, they ran sly rackets for food and then lit fires to cook little meals for themselves, and they cared

damn-all about arriving parties, and least of all about the helpless sick.

Unfortunately, Tiger did not reserve his savage discipline for these characters, being pretty well blind to reason and common sense and half off his head with the love of cruelty. He got the idea into his head that our sick men were malingering, and he used to parade them for hours, in all weathers and at all time of the day and night, while he walked up and down the line, scowling and swearing and lashing out with a stick.

There was one senior British officer, a lazy and useless piece of work, who had frequently been caught by Tiger happily asleep in working hours. This happened once too often: I was standing nearby, and I heard Tiger let out such a roar that the sleeping officer nearly jumped out of his skin. He tried to excuse himself by complaining of dysentery; and all of us, Japanese and British alike, were amused when the Tiger, pretending to take this plea seriously, led him off to a one-man tent three feet away from the maggoty latrines and made him stay there for a week.

Back at Tonchan main camp, I soon had cholera on my hands again; a great big hefty fellow whom we called Lofty caught it because the camp administration had lacked the initiative to clean up and decontaminate a cholera patient's bed-planks, and died in a few days because nobody bothered to tell me of his condition. He died, not of cholera, but of cardiac beri-beri; I had been expecting this complication and saving an ampoule of vitamin B.₁ to put it right.

I was unable to keep an eye on poor Lofty myself because at the time I was immobilized with beri-beri and amoebic dysentery; some of the men carried me on a

stretcher to visit my patients, but I could not ask them to go into the cholera compound. I realized bitterly that if the men had kept the promise to keep me informed of Lofty's condition, he need not have died; now I was able to use the vitamin ampoule on myself, and sensation began to return to my legs, which had collapsed and gone completely numb and uncontrollable.

It had been horrible to lie there, feeling useless and unable to move, looking down at my body and seeing only spiky bones and rags of skin. If it had not been for the men under my care, I might have felt almost like taking an overdose of morphia; but this would have been giving in to the Japs, and I bloody well wasn't going to do that.

Then, like an answer to prayer, along came Boon Phong. They carried me on my stretcher down to the river to see him: he was shocked at the sight of me and made me a present of eggs and condensed milk. He also gave me ninety-six grains of emetine, injections and tablets of Vitamin B.₁, and several other medicines. Herr Singenthaler, the Swiss Consul at Bangkok, and Herr Tanner sent their good wishes, and I asked Boon Phong to take a report back to them for transmission to the Swiss authorities. This report dealt with Japanese atrocities, and also with the working conditions which were suffered by the P.O.W.s and the outbreaks of cholera and other diseases which resulted: many other such reports were sent later on.

The medicines Boon Phong left behind him were of great value and helped me on the road to recovery, and before long I was able to hobble about with a stick. But I was not at all well, and in particular I suffered even worse than before from night blindness; we had another

emergency operation for appendicitis, and this time somebody had got hold of an army operating set, but I had to hand over to someone else half way through, since the light was fading and I could not see what I was doing.

On 3rd September, 1943, we left for Kinsayok. It was on this date that the war had begun in 1939; also it was my father's birthday, a gloomy one no doubt, since I had heard that he had not received any information as to whether I was alive or dead. Many families had at this time the heartbreaking task of writing cheerful letters without knowing whether the recipients still lived.

Kinsayok had been used already as a big P.O.W. camp, but it was under reconstruction. New huts were being erected, and in the meantime we lived in tents: this sounds comfortable, but the tents were so ancient and the rain so heavy that we might almost as well have slept in the open.

The railway had passed Kinsayok and the men's work there was much less arduous than we had been used to during the previous months. Almost every day fresh vegetables arrived by train. Lt.-Col. Lilly, the C.O. of 'B' Battalion, arrived and became our Camp Commandant and S.B.O. All in all, things were better than we had known since Wampo days. But before long everything was spoilt again by the arrival of an appalling character whom the men called Dr. Death; he was a Japanese medical orderly, Sergeant Okado by name, the very worst sort of sadistic bastard, with a special fondness for tormenting and torturing doctors. His sessions used to start off from a general imputation to us of the blame for the fact that the P.O.W.s were not fat and in vigorous good health; we were just bamboo-doctors, and we must

do better. To drive the lesson home he would make us stand to attention in the mercilessly hot sun for two or three hours on end, sitting comfortably in the shade of a big tree to see that we did not budge. When he got tired of this he would strut in front of us, slapping each doctor across the face with his open hand and saying again and again that we must cut down our sick lists. These hate sessions were even more unpleasant and alarming when Okado was drunk, which was often; then he would curse and swear until we began to feel glorious hopes that he might burst a blood vessel. This never happened, unfortunately. Sometimes he used to emphasize his attitude yet more strongly by waving his sword at us, which was a little unnerving.

I remember one such occasion, and in my mind's eye I can see Okado swaying and blinking and grunting in front of the first doctor he came to, and then asking him, with a shout and a horrible leer, precisely in what manner he would choose to die. He went all down the line of us, asking us all the same unseemly question in turn and encouraging us to answer promptly with slaps in the face and kicks in the groin. Daddy Richardson was first and chose an overdose of morphia, then came Vincent Bennett who preferred hanging, and then Major Collett, R.A.A.M.C., who fancied the gas chamber. My turn was next, and slowly through the mists of alcohol it occurred to Okado that he was having his leg pulled. He went suddenly vicious and bellowed at me 'Kurrah! Well, you bearded bamboo-doctor, how do you want to die?' I knew that I would get a bashing whatever I answered, since Okado hated me because my beard was a better looking one than his own, which consisted of three long hairs growing from a mole on his chin. I said,

dreamily, that I would like to die in the arms of a beautiful woman. 'Kurrah!' again: 'What did you say?' He was staring at me fiercely through his slit eyes: I thought I was in for trouble, but repeated in an even more deeply sentimental voice that I would like to die in the embrace of some beautiful voluptuous girl. There was a moment of tense silence, and then Okado started laughing hysterically; my words must have aroused and stimulated his suppressed urges, because he dismissed the hate session and sent us away, still laughing to himself and repeating endlessly that this would be, indeed, a glorious way to die.

Unfortunately he soon returned to his evil ways, and persevered in them; but otherwise life at Kinsayok became fairly quiet, which was very restful and agreeable for us, especially after the murderous 'speedo' period. We heard before long that the Japanese authorities in Tokyo were becoming worried at the appalling death rate on the river, and were sending some Red Cross men to have a look at us and report back. Before long we were told that this Red Cross team was on its way to inspect us; everyone was put to work cleaning and tidying up the place, and on the day when the team was due to arrive we were all given blankets, and condensed milk and other nourishing foodstuffs were arranged very carefully in the cookhouse. Along came the Red Cross men, short-arsed little Japs every one of them; they glanced around cursorily without speaking to a single P.O.W., expressed general satisfaction in all directions, and went their way. Immediately, everything had to be handed back; blankets, condensed milk, the lot.

After their visit, Kinsayok became a kind of rest camp. There was no work to do except for the ordinary camp



SERGEANT OKADA, CALLED 'DR. DEATH'



Imperial War Museum

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF TAMUANG

fatigues. Our morale was very high, partly because of the rest and the better food but also because we had once again come into possession of a wireless receiver. It was a most ingenious affair, built inside an R.A.M.C. type drinking-water bottle; Jap search parties could look straight at it and suspect nothing. It was worked late at night and very cautiously, and any news we heard had to be kept on ice for a few days and then put round the camp casually as a rumour picked up from some Siamese boatman down by the river.

The receiver was powered with small torch batteries, supplied by the Japanese to myself and the other doctors for instruments such as the auroscope or ophthalmoscope. The trouble was that they did not last very long when used to supply the heavy current needed for the receiver, and the Japanese became very suspicious at the enormous number of batteries we needed to keep one or two simple instruments going. But once again, as always, a little flannel did the trick: we explained seriously that the best battery in existence, the world's No. 1 grand magnificent battery, was Japanese, whereas these which they were supplying to us were made in Siam and therefore, of course, immeasurably inferior. In fact, the Siamese batteries were excellent, and we soon acquired any number of them.

When the news was good, and it often was in these days, we all looked very jubilant, and the Japs would ask us why. They must have suspected that we had a wireless, because they instituted surprise searches; but our old friend Red-Balls was there and used to tip us off when there was going to be a search. He was a Korean: most of his people were even worse than the Japanese, but he for some reason was well disposed towards us.

Our gentlemanly ease at Kinsayok was very far from meaning that my medical responsibilities had dwindled to nothing. At one time the whole camp was depressed to hear that a member of 'D' Battalion, Private J. Craig of the 2nd Gordon Highlanders, was dangerously ill. 'Snuffy' Craig, as they called him, was a great character, almost the camp jester: he was a born entertainer, and the things he got up to at camp concerts endeared him to everybody, including the Japs. Now he was going downhill rapidly, suffering from malaria, amoebic dysentery, beri-beri and extreme anaemia, and not responding at all to treatment.

I called in several other doctors, and we all agreed that there was nothing more that we could do for Snuffy. We knew that a blood transfusion would help, but we had no apparatus to carry it out and no citrate to stop the blood from clotting; moreover the men in the camp were so bunged up with malaria that their blood would probably do the patient more harm than good, besides dangerously weakening the donor. It was indeed a depressing situation. Poor Snuffy was in constant pain, moaning all the time, and I decided that at any rate he should die in peace, and started regular morphia injections. After a while, when it was obvious that he was on the way out and that I could do no harm, I decided to attempt a blood transfusion in spite of everything.

I asked for volunteers and got plenty of them; I could only use group 'O' men since I did not know Snuffy's blood group. As I had no citrate the only feasible method was the direct one: needles were fixed in the donor's arm and in Snuffy's arm, and the body of a syringe was filled from the one needle and emptied into the other. We had two syringes and kept up a continuous flow; the

patient improved a good deal, and I repeated the blood transfusions during the next three days.

Soon the morphia injections were cut down and stopped, and Snuffy sat up and took nourishment. His life was saved, but I found that I now had a morphia addict on my hands, who made hell unless he had injections at regular intervals. I had to wean him off it very carefully; his friends stole food for him and before long he was perfectly well. This technique for blood transfusion was a most valuable weapon in the fight against disease: especially a little later, when we were attacked by blackwater fever.

On 14th January, 1944, the Japanese asked for a working party of five hundred men to go down the river to a place about forty miles from Kinsayok, and to establish there what later became known as the Riverside Camp. Once the camp was built, the job was to tow heavily-laden Jap barges up the river, which was in spate at this time of the year and swifter than the engines of these barges could cope with. I joined this party as M.O., and the officer in charge was Captain J. Rae, S.S.V.F.

Life at Riverside Camp was remarkably pleasant. The Jap Camp Commandant was only a corporal: with none of their officers there, a wonderful holiday atmosphere was felt by all of us, including the guards. Our men got to work towing the Japanese barges, and before long we were towing trading boats for the Siamese as well; they also found the rapids and the turbulent stream difficult, and negotiated with the Japanese to rent our services. Payment would turn out to be perhaps ten bottles of Siamese whisky, six big tins of biscuits and several hundred duck eggs per Siamese barge dragged up the

difficult stretch of river. The Japs kept a few eggs and some of the whisky and gave the rest of the loot to us; and since in a single day we often disposed of as many as five or six Siamese barges, we were soon living like fighting cocks and suffering terrible hangovers.

Even apart from this excellent arrangement we ate well: plenty of fresh vegetables could be obtained from barges both Japanese and Siamese by various means; and pigs, being ferried up the river for Japanese consumption, could be persuaded to die inexplicably in transit if a few tots of whisky were given to the boatman.

One or two hundred men worked at a time, and the rest lazed about, sunbathed, or went swimming and fishing. The Siamese taught us a new way of catching fish, subtler than the use of hand grenades but equally abhorrent to one's sporting instincts. They used to make a thick paste out of cooked rice and roll it into little balls the size of marbles, putting into the middle of each little ball a lump of their own filthy black tobacco which had been well chewed previously. These poison-bombs would be thrown into the river while a team of men waited a hundred yards downstream: the fish swallowed the rice with enjoyment but were laid out flat by the tobacco, and floated helplessly downstream.

All this wonderful food made our health excellent. Our only complaint was mosquitos. We stayed at this camp for six weeks, and during that time I made sure that every man took his prophylactic quinine; and during that time we had practically no malaria. One day a friendly guard asked me to go with him on a hunting expedition, for deer. We prowled around and saw various signs, but no animals; then suddenly, while we were resting by the river bank, we heard the noise of a

pom-pom. At once the Jap signalled to me in an agitated way, beckoning me to go over and hide behind some bushes. 'Nippon officer, maybe he come!' he muttered nervously when I reached him. In fact, the boat was full of Japanese officers: it was very amusing to see one Jap hiding from another, but nasty to think of the beating we would have had if we had been spotted.

Then one day a barge stopped at the camp for the night, and the Jap in charge told us that he was carrying mail for the P.O.W.s at Kinsayok: he agreed to let us see our own mail, provided we put it back. Most of the men had letters, and I had three from my father.

When we got back to Kinsayok we found the reconstruction of the camp completed: about five thousand P.O.W.s had been assembled there from various up-country camps. The camp was overrun with rats, and some of these very ominously died for no obvious reason. The Japs had these rats examined and told us that they had died of bubonic plague. This was appalling news: the plague is spread by the bite of infected fleas which live on rats, and we had already heard rumours that it had broken out ninety miles to the north. None of us had any protective clothing or insecticides, and we could see no way of avoiding the disease.

We put the whole camp to work exterminating the rats, and in six weeks we had killed and incinerated some ten thousand.

Fortunately the rats did not bring bubonic plague into the camp; but they did bring typhus. This disease is caused by a virus, which lives in rats and is transferred from rat to rat and from rat to man by fleas: it must not be confused with typhoid fever which is water-borne. The textbooks say encouragingly that typhus has claimed

more victims among doctors than any other epidemic disease. The incubation period varies between twelve and seventeen days, and then the disease usually starts up with severe headaches, sometimes accompanied by shivering, rather like a malarial attack. The temperature shoots up to 104° , the skin becomes dry, the face flushed, and the eyes red and congested. The mouth becomes foul and the lips crack. The patient now acquires a characteristic appearance of dullness and apathy, and by the third day a rash has appeared over the whole body. About the end of the first week, delirium starts, sometimes accompanied by terrifying hallucinations. The fever lasts for twelve or seventeen days and the mortality may be anything between ten and seventy per cent, or even higher in severe epidemics.

We had no treatment for typhus: we had to stand by and watch, encouraging the patient as best we could.

The camp at Kinsayok came gradually to take on the appearance of a gigantic hospital; partly because of the rapidly spreading typhus epidemic, partly because of the sick men who were being brought in almost every day by train from further up the country, and also for another reason. Now that the railway was finished over a great deal of its length, with trains running regularly, the allied air forces had started to attack it: their target was not so much the line itself as the actual trains, and in particular the engines.

When the planes came over everybody would dive off the train and into the jungle, and the pilots would turn and dive backwards and forwards machine-gunning the train and every place near it where people might be hiding. Casualties were heavy, and any number of P.O.W.s were brought in to Kinsayok horribly wounded

during these attacks. Many others, who had survived disease and deprivation for years, died in the jungle at the hands of their friends, beside the railway which they had built for their enemies.

Events of this kind were all too frequent on all fronts: they revealed with exceptional clarity the bestial and foolish character of war.

At Kinsayok there was a special compound, containing not men but cattle. The Japs had started sending numbers of scraggy cows and buffaloes up the line by train, intending them to be eaten by P.O.W.s and their own soldiers as well; and since many of the up-country camps were being closed down, these beasts ended up with us. Soon we had two hundred of them; Australian P.O.W.s looked after them, and we were allowed to slaughter one for every thousand prisoners, every three or four days.

One morning one of these Australians turned up on my sick parade with a swollen area on the back of his hand and over the right shoulder: the skin in these places was dark and looked like an old scar, and a serosanguinous fluid oozed from under it. Headaches, nausea and a high temperature completed a clinical picture which was all too typical and obvious: the man admitted, when I asked him, that two of his cows had died and that some more looked pretty sick, and I realized that on top of everything else we now had anthrax on our hands. This disease is picked up by handling infected animals; we had no serum for it, but managed to cure the man with M. and B. 693 and intravenous arsenicals, these being obtained through the good offices of our syphilitic Jap guards. The trouble was that the rest of the cattle had to be slaughtered: we ate them all in a very short time, in

spite of the danger of contracting anthrax. Our stomachs rejoiced, but our poor bowels worked overtime.

Always during these latter days we were aware that the war was moving towards some kind of climax. Our horizon was no longer limited to the labours and miseries of our own captivity: we had our secret wireless, we noticed the mounting scale of Allied air activity, we saw the first beginnings of doubt and hesitation in the minds of the Japanese. Large numbers of their front-line troops used to go by on the way to the fighting in Burma, and at first, before the trains started running, they went on foot, with parties of P.O.W.s to help carry their weapons, ammunition, supplies, and so forth. Sometimes these Japanese soldiers used to give themselves great burns and blisters on their feet, using the furnace in our blacksmith's shop, so as to go sick and dodge the marching and fighting.

Completion of the line did not mean that life became carefree for our old masters and enemies, the Japanese railway engineers. Very often a group of them would come running excitedly round the camp at Kinsayok, shouting, 'All men push!' This meant that we had to drop whatever we were doing and run down to the track, where we would find an exhausted-looking locomotive puffing and heaving fruitlessly at an enormously long and heavy train. It was quite obvious that the preliminary calculations and planning in connection with the railway had been done very crudely, and that the gradients had not been properly related to the weight of traffic and the power of the available locomotives. The fact that these were burning wood logs instead of coal made things worse, and by now of course the effects of our sabotage were becoming apparent and the line was acquiring a

switchback appearance here and there. So while the engine wheels skidded and spun uselessly, two or three thousand P.O.W.s would attach themselves to the train and heave it painfully up hills and round bends.

The completion of the railway meant another move and a big one: 'D' and 'F' Battalions went first, to build at Tamuang down the river a large camp to hold ten thousand prisoners. I went with the advance party as Medical Officer in charge. The site was not far from where we had first stopped after leaving Bang Pong some eighteen months earlier — the place where Colonel Ishii and his Spirit of Bushido had provided a lorry to bring in the weary stragglers. Now, by way of a contrast, we travelled on our own railway, in relative comfort but, in spite of the magnificent scenery, rather apprehensively: only two days previously a party of P.O.W.s had suffered very heavy losses in an air attack, and apart from this danger we could not help remembering how craftily, during the construction work, we had sabotaged the wooden bridges over which our train now rumbled.

But we arrived at Tamuang without any crashing or shooting, and the men got to work on the new camp — rather hurriedly, since the main party was due to arrive in a fortnight's time. Meanwhile, I determined to make the most of an unusual situation: the camp site was right in the centre of what had once been a tobacco plantation, several plants were still growing, and I set to work making cigars.

I had seen them being made years before, in the Canaries, and I understood the general idea. It is well known that the best cigar is one rolled on the thigh of a shapely maiden; no shapely maiden was available, so I used my own skinny and hairy thigh. The leaves were

properly dried and prepared first, and when it was finished my first cigar looked and smelt very fine and expensive; the only trouble was that the rolling process removed all the hairs from my thigh and incorporated them into the cigar.

It still seemed a bit damp, so I dried it carefully for a few days, during which the whole camp became aware of its existence. Eventually on All Fools' Day I lit it in a lordly fashion after breakfast, in front of an interested, if lousy, audience. It was like smoking feathers: I have never been more disappointed. Soon I found it necessary to call sick parade, so as to have an excuse for bolting into privacy.

I carried out that sick parade amid waves of nausea, and by the afternoon I felt so terrible that I made solemn and desperate vows — not to give up smoking, but just never to smoke again a cigar rolled on my own thigh. I felt sure that my sweaty skin and all those hairs had enhanced the natural vigour and potency of the tobacco.

That evening I developed a severe frontal headache, and my back started to feel as though a red-hot poker was being shoved down my vertebral canal. I spent a wretched night, and felt even worse in the morning; my eyes were red and congested, my skin was hot and dry, I could not sweat. Suddenly it dawned on me that the cigar was not responsible: I had typhus.

I managed to get someone to send for Pinky Riley, and I was soon carried to a small clearing where I already had six typhus patients under an awning, some of them very ill indeed. They greeted me with wan sympathy.

Soon I was in a bad way. The headaches worried me most: they were not the usual dull flat kind, but high-pitched and violent. My eyeballs felt like two white-hot

marbles, slowly burning their way into the sockets: the slightest movement doubled the pain, so at first I took exaggerated care to keep still. My lips were cracked and I knew they had turned black, the inside of my mouth was dry, and my tongue felt twice its size and was coated with a dirty brown substance which I could scrape off with my finger-nail. Day after day I lay staring before me with my eyes open, knowing that I was on the brink of delirium; it was suffocatingly hot under the awning, I gasped and panted for breath, and my heart thumped and fought as if trying to escape. I could not take my temperature, since the thermometer could not, in the daytime, be brought down below 104°. All hope of sleep disappeared, and I lost count of time: my eyes and my head burnt unendurably, and I felt a terrible desire to scream and fling my arms and legs about in jerks, as I could even then remember other men doing just before they died. With the last rags of my self-control I tried and tried again to make myself lie still, until eventually the waves of fever overwhelmed me in an endless burning torrent of delirious images, and the world receded to an immense distance for an infinite time.

A voice spoke from nowhere: 'Here, sir: drink this: it's the iced soda-water and milk.' With vast effort and pain, I struggled through to reality and recognition: 'Pinky!' I croaked. 'Oh God, he knows me, he recognizes me! — for Christ's sake, sir, are you feeling better? Blimey, you gave us a fright! — carrying on like a raving lunatic for four bloody days; you even had the Japs worried; do you know, Red-Balls saved your life? He went and fetched the Jap commandant to see you, and when he heard you raving for iced soda-water and milk, blow me if he didn't send a bloody lorry to Kamburi,

twenty miles off, every bloody day, sir, just to bring you what you asked for!’

Slowly the world came back into focus. I savoured the cool drink, and felt much better after it, but still completely weak and exhausted. My headaches had gone, and I could move my head and my eyes. Feebly, I looked around me: there were only four still alive, out of the six. ‘Now get some sleep, sir.’

I woke up feeling faintly hungry, although still very weak; Pinky told me I had slept for fourteen hours on end. I had been under the awning for seventeen days.

Pinky nursed me devotedly and various friends kept me supplied with wonderful food stolen from the Japs. Gradually I got my strength back; on top of the typhus, I had been suffering from malaria and beri-beri, and it was some time before I felt really fit again.

As soon as my nerves would stand the strain, I plucked up courage and decided to make another cigar. This time I left my thighs alone and rolled the leaves on a flat wooden board; and this time the experiment was very successful.

Before long the cigar-making industry was well established at Tamuang. It turned out to be excellent occupational therapy: there were any number of men in the camp who could only be described as human wrecks, many of them having lost both legs and one or two of them both arms as well, in consequence of the horrible tropical ulcers which I mentioned earlier. Anything which kept these men’s minds busy and so saved them from going mad was immensely valuable. The cigars they made were sold in the canteen, and a very good smoke they were too for their price, which was two cents for a six-inch cigar.

Plenty of tobacco was grown in the surrounding countryside, and one could buy through the canteen a kati (one and a half pounds) of finely shredded Virginian-type Siamese tobacco, suitable for cigarette rolling, for sixty-five cents. This was at least a month's supply: we called it Hag's Bush or Granny's Armpit.

Life at Tamuang settled down to a fairly peaceful routine: the Japs did not bother us much except for *tenku* or roll-call, and we had a very forceful and inspiring leader in our Camp Commandant, Lt.-Col. A. E. Knights, Royal Norfolk Regiment. Among various minor amenities we organized a library for ourselves: most men had an odd book or two, and we pooled them and passed them around. The Japs insisted that all books had to be handed over for censoring: they simply stamped them with Japanese characters and handed them straight back, not understanding a word of them.

We had a number of doctors and medical orderlies with us, now that so many different units had been amalgamated into this one big camp at Tamuang: Lt.-Col. Bill Harvey, R.A.M.C., took over the medical wards, and at my own request I was placed in charge of the dysentery wards, being allocated two huts, each of them capable of holding two hundred and fifty men.

These wards were full most of the time, but I had remarkable success in treating my dysentery cases, not losing a single man from this disease from the time of my taking over these wards, in May 1944, until the end. I acquired a vast reputation for ability to cope with it, and I once overheard Pinky Riley pay tribute to my skill in peculiarly apt terms. A man came to him and asked anxiously whether this M.O. knew anything about dysentery; Pinky replied with vast emphasis, 'Pav know

anything about dysentery? Good God, man, he's shit hot.'

No doctor could wish for a more appropriate and deeply felt testimonial; I have sometimes thought of having it inscribed on parchment in red and gold, and framed for the wall of my consulting room. In point of fact, the success we had with dysentery was to an overwhelming degree the direct consequence of the skill and devotion of my nursing orderlies.

I only met one Japanese doctor during the whole of my time in Siam. His name was Lieutenant Moroka, and he was stationed at Tarsau; now he came to Tamuang and spoke to all the doctors, asking them to write freely on any medical subject which interested us, since the Japanese medical authorities were interested to learn of the conditions under which the P.O.W.s had been living and the various diseases which resulted.

I wrote an article called '*Intestinal Diseases among Prisoners of War*', adding to it an introduction explaining in general terms, but emphatically, exactly how the disease rate had come to be so high. It is hard to say whether this and the other medical reports we wrote had any effect on the Japanese or not; it may have been as a result of this that they started universal rodding a few weeks later, in an attempt to detect carriers of cholera.

This meant that we had to bare ourselves, which we did towards the rising sun, and then suffer a painful and intimate form of probing with a glass rod. The Japanese medical orderly who was performing the operation made one rod do for three men: after they had all suffered it, the rod was immersed in a special bacterial culture medium, stirred around briskly in it, and then discarded. The culture medium was incubated, and if it grew

cholera germs the three men concerned were rodded individually to track down the one responsible.

Even if something had been done to treat or even to isolate the known carriers, this practice was a dangerous one, since it tended to spread the disease: if the first man rodded were a carrier, he would infect the other two. However, during our stay at Tamuang, we only had twenty cholera cases.

At this stage of the war, the Japanese seemed to be getting the wind up: they were always springing searches and roll-calls upon us without warning, and also interrogating us in order to find out why we looked so damned cheerful. They were obviously convinced that the war news, as well as the better food, was improving our morale, and they wanted to find out how we were getting to know what went on.

Now, by order of the Emperor, it was decreed that all P.O.W. camps were to have deep ditches dug all round them, 15 feet deep and 10 feet wide, with machine gun emplacements built at suitable points. Red-Balls told us the idea: if the Allies landed or any serious disturbance broke out, all P.O.W.s were to be forced into the ditches and massacred. We were therefore set to work digging what might easily turn out to be our communal grave.

This ditch made it a good deal less easy for us to move in and out of the camp about what we regarded as our lawful occasions: a bamboo pole had to be put across cautiously after dark and used as a bridge. Various causes made it necessary for men to use the bridge: the improved diet had awakened physical urges, which Siamese ladies were ready to gratify in return for woollen socks. It was soon realized among the camp gallants that it was a great

mistake to part with a pair of socks: one sock one night, and its fellow the next. Socks very soon acquired a kind of scarcity-value, and it was unwise to hang them up to dry without keeping a careful eye on them. These outings were often combined with expeditions to obtain altar wine for mass: there were various Catholics among the Jap guards who used to smuggle it in, but when they could not do so, Father Burke, one of the two chaplains in the camp, used to send somebody out to barter with the Siamese.

Father Burke was a Redemptorist, a very devout man, who insisted that all Catholics must attend mass daily. This happened in the evenings after roll-call, in the open near some bushes: this made it possible for the devout Japanese guards to attend without being too conspicuous to their officers.

I found Father Burke's counsel of daily mass quite impractical, and he grew very sorrowful in consequence about the state of my soul, and used to pray for me.

What with one thing and another, sacred and profane love, the crossing of this ditch by night became a regular and commonplace occurrence, so that Red-Balls and even various Catholic Jap guards who were friendly to us, warned us to take more care.

Just after midnight one dark night we were suddenly awakened by the Japanese bugle, followed very soon afterwards by the sound of guards running about excitedly and shouting, '*tenku, tenku*'. At first we thought that this was going to be another of their surprise searches. We were paraded outside the huts and made to number off in Japanese; those who were still sleepy or had forgotten their Jap numbers were slapped in the face.

They stood us there at attention for about twenty minutes, and then we heard a rifle shot. This was very unnerving: the Japs appeared to be more excited than usual, and after making us stand at attention for a further hour they sent us back to the huts. We felt sure that they had caught someone entering or leaving the camp along the bamboo pole, and had shot him on the spot.

This turned out to be more or less the truth: the Japs tried to make out at first that a man had escaped, but Red-Balls told us that the missing man had actually been shot by a Japanese major. They knew all about these nocturnal expeditions, and they had sprung this surprise roll-call in order to catch the offenders: this particular man had got back into camp in time and they had not even seen him coming: he had been found crouching about ten yards inside the fence. The Jap major who saw him immediately told a guard to shoot the man: the guard refused: the major took the rifle and shot the man dead. They had kept us waiting at attention for a long time after that while the man was hastily buried and all traces of this crime obliterated. The Japanese Camp Commandant was very startled next day when our senior officers called on him and made it clear that they knew exactly what had happened. In response to their requests, the man's body was handed over for Christian burial; the Japanese major who had shot the man faced a war criminal's trial in due course and was hanged.

Tamuang being a large camp, there were a fair number of Japanese officers and guards there, so a large pen was built around a pool, and two thousand ducks were put there. Two P.O.W.s were put in charge of the ducks, and the Japs guarded them night and day to make sure

that we controlled our greedy impulses. No doubt they knew, as we did, what had happened at Chungkai P.O.W. camp: there the ducks inhabited a big pool not far from the camp latrines. These were of the modern functional type with built-in ventilation — that is, the side walls did not reach right down to the ground. Vast numbers of maggots inhabited the pits and occasionally crawled out to take short walks in the surrounding countryside, where they were very liable to be gobbled up by ducks; the ducks, led on in defiance of all prudence by this delicious feast, used to go nearer and nearer to the latrine wall, from which unseen hands would throw juicy maggots towards them in order to lure them still closer. Then at the critical moment an arm would shoot out and the poor duck would not even have time for one last small quack.

The Japanese could not understand how their ducks were disappearing: they kept looking around for the duck feathers which they were sure must exist somewhere and which would form incriminating evidence. But they never found any feathers, as they were always well buried in the latrine pits.

All this was at Chungkai: at Tamuang, things were easier, since the duck guards always found the hot sun and dinner-time fullness too much for them, and slept long and loud under a mango tree. As soon as they were well away, one or another of our duck-men would get to work with a sack.

That afternoon a message would arrive at the hospital for me to the effect that Plan Seven was in operation. This meant that seven Vultures would assemble after roll-call that evening, the King Vulture presiding, to eat roast duck. I provided the hooch for these Plan Seven

dinners: we had obtained permission from the Japanese to make surgical alcohol for the hospital, and they even gave us rice and sugar and yeast for this purpose, stipulating, however, that for every bottle we kept, they wanted three. This still was in the hands of a Vulture call Rintoul who was an analytical chemist by profession: he used to brew a fearful raw liquor of his own invention, triple distilled and very potent, guaranteed to shrink even the biggest of tonsils: it would have blown our heads to pieces if we had not diluted it with water. The ritual for Plan Seven was as follows: first we drank the King's health, then Churchill's health, then confusion to our enemies; then we ate our dinner, and afterwards sat back and smoked our home-made double corona cigars. We never wore dinner jackets: this was rather deplorable, no doubt, but a G-string makes scratching so much easier.

To while away the time I used to study the life of the ant. These abounded in any number of different varieties. There was a fairly big ant, dark grey in colour, which dug little holes in the ground to live in: if you tapped the ground near the hole, the ant would stick its head out doubtfully, thinking that the tapping noise meant rain or some other disaster, and go downstairs again after plugging the entrance door with earth.

The red ants were more interesting still. They made great oval nests like green rugger balls, high up in the trees; you could see them haring up and down the tree trunks on foraging expeditions. People said that they could lift a snake up into a tree; this sounded a tall story, until somebody killed a four-foot snake and left it at the foot of a suitable tree. The ants organized themselves very quickly into working parties conducted on 'speedo' lines; they lined up along the snake, hanging on to it and

to each other and heaving, and after four days' incessant work in relays they got the snake up into the tree.

If you annoyed them, these red ants would spit a fine jet of formic acid at you. They used to bite hard and painfully, and not let go. Sometimes the men used to stage battles between these red ants and the white ants who lived in great mounds of earth, hardened into something like concrete. They used to break one of these nests open and put a few red ants near the opening: a terrific battle followed, invariably won by the white ants, who used their big claws to nip off the invaders' heads and legs, but suffered casualties from the formic acid. Even while the battle was still raging, sapper parties from the white ants would start repairing the breach with wet earth, which dried off and became completely hard within a couple of hours.

The Japs were fond of catching scorpions, which were plentiful enough: ugly brutes six inches or eight inches long. There were also thousands of snakes sharing our jungle, but during the whole of the three years I spent in Siam I never came across a single case of snake bite. Once a cobra squirted its poison straight into a man's eye: we immediately washed it out, but for a week afterwards the patient had a very inflamed eye. But in general, snakes left us alone: they are only disposed to attack when they are alarmed or accidentally trodden on.

During the dry season in Siam, fires started spontaneously in the jungle fairly often, and often burned on the hills for some time, looking rather decorative at night. But they disturbed the wild life of the jungle, and they frightened the snakes in particular, so that they used to come down to the river to cool off. Since most of our camps were by the riverside, any man sleeping on the

ground was liable to be wakened up by the pleasant sensation of a snake crawling over his face.

While we were at Tamuang, we had our first case of blackwater fever, which is a very serious complication of malaria. It is especially liable to attack white men who have spent a year established in a heavily-infected malarial zone: its cause is not clearly understood, although it is believed that repeated small doses of quinine may have something to do with it. The urine becomes dark, owing to the presence in it of blood pigments: the patient soon becomes very ill indeed, with a rapid pulse and a high fever of 106° or more. In a matter of hours, the red blood count drops from the usual five million to two million or less. Later on vomiting and jaundice set in, and the general outlook is very bad, with a mortality rate of fifty per cent or more.

The treatment for blackwater fever is absolute rest, with repeated blood transfusions and intravenous salines. We were now making blood transfusions as a matter of course, but with an improved technique: instead of transfusing whole blood directly, we collected it in a sterilized jam jar and whisked it with a bamboo stick, so that the fibrin would clot and could be removed afterwards by straining. The finished product was blood which would not clot, and which could be handled in the same way as an ordinary saline solution.

While at Tamuang and afterwards until my departure from Siam we treated sixteen blackwater fever cases, and none of them died. This record was an unusually good one, a fact which I attribute to the early stage at which we started treatment. The figures usually quoted refer to peacetime, when the typical victim of blackwater

fever would be a man living in the bush or on his plantation, miles away from the nearest hospital or doctor, so that treatment would be started late and he would have to be moved to hospital.

It is curious to reflect that we had discovered a situation which made it positively desirable and very healthy to be a half-starved prisoner of war.

Chapter Six

THERE we sat in the great camp at Tamuang, waiting, guessing and hoping, while the war ticked its way slowly and painfully towards the end.

The irony of our situation came home to us forcibly during Allied air attacks, which now became more and more frequent. The Japanese built a watch-tower and kept a man on it all day and all night looking out for aircraft; he used to scream out suddenly, 'Hikoki, hikoki, kushu, kushu!' and then scabble down the rickety steps of the tower to take shelter in a trench or behind a tree, often behaving as if he thought that our chaps were after him personally.

They came over by moonlight usually, and we could see them; their target seemed to lie in the Bangkok direction. Sometimes as they flew over they would switch on their landing lights; it was wonderful to feel that we were not forgotten, and very tantalizing and strange to think that only a few hundred feet away our countrymen were cruising freely through the air, able to come and go as they wished.

But we were not always so glad to see them. In spite of the clear requirements of international law and our own repeated protests as well, the Japanese very frequently sited P.O.W. camps close to strategic targets, and many prisoners died in consequence of this. In particular, there was a large bridge just outside Kamburi, which crossed

the Kwai Noi at what one might call the beginning of the jungle; for quite a long period this bridge was alternately damaged by Allied bombing and repaired by P.O.W. labour, and every six weeks or so, when the time for bombing came round again, the prisoners working on it would suffer heavy casualties. From Tamuang, twenty miles away, we could follow the progress of these raids: sometimes as many as eighteen planes would join in the attack, circling over the target and peeling off to drop their bombs on the bridge, or sometimes by mistake on the adjacent P.O.W. camp, while we watched from a distance.

We only had one attack at Tamuang, a very minor one: one of our planes flew over low, and a Jap fired at it with his rifle. The pilot replied with a burst of cannon shells, but luckily nobody was hurt; many of the men jumped out of their slit trenches and waved madly. The pilot turned round and opened his canopy, and then flew past again and dropped a couple of parcels. We whisked these away into hiding before the Japs could get at them, and found them to be a couple of K-rations. Apart from various items of food, they included — Oh glory! Oh civilization! Oh high standard of gracious living! — four sheets of toilet paper. We had all been long accustomed to the coolness of a jungle leaf and to the Chinese technique with bamboo sticks, while the Dutch preferred to use water from their drinking bottles and often gave themselves dysentery thereby; obviously, we were going to be spoilt.

Civilization seemed to be hitting back at the god of war. One day we were astounded to hear on our secret wireless the following glad tidings: 'The Americans have now solved one of the problems of jungle warfare, having

perfected a portable refrigerator.' We remembered that a Japanese soldier needed only some uncooked rice and some dried and salted fish in his haversack to become an independent fighting unit for two weeks at a time, with no toilet paper or portable refrigerators to clutter up his army's lines of communication; and we wondered whether it was possible that somebody, somewhere, had dislocated his sense of proportion.

These air raids were responsible, in an odd roundabout fashion, for the Japs going almost frantic in their determination to find out where we were hiding contraband arms. In point of fact we had none, but the Japanese felt quite sure that guns and ammunition were being smuggled into the camp in the sacks of rice brought in for our rations. So all the rice had to be emptied out and the bags searched at the guard room. This particular mistake was due to a rather comical misunderstanding of some leaflets which Allied pilots had dropped in order to cheer us poor prisoners up a little; one leaflet showed a map of Europe, with the extent of the Allied advance clearly marked, and in the corner was written 'It's in the bag, chums!' Painstaking work with an English-Japanese dictionary led our serious-minded but not very bright lords and masters to suspect the rice bags.

We were given printed field-postcards to send home, and one entry on them read, 'Please see that is taken care of.' One man wrote 'lousy grub' in this space, and when questioned assured the Jap censor that this was the name of his aunt. He was made to fill out a new card, reading, 'Please see that Auntie Lousy Grub is taken care of.'

Sometimes we underwent an experience in its way

quite as terrifying as an air attack, and, as far as Tamuang was concerned, much more destructive. On a grey murky day we would hear from an immense distance the noise of a tempestuous wind, growing louder as the storm approached, until suddenly the sky turned black and it hit us, with such terrific force that trees would be uprooted, our flimsy huts knocked to pieces, and the screaming air filled with flying débris.

I remember one such storm at Tamuang. This one came on quite suddenly, and several of us doctors found ourselves struggling to hold more or less in position the flimsy hut in which a moment before we had been sitting without a care in the world. Then, at the height of the storm, the sky changed from near-black to a metallic violet colour and there followed such lightning and such bellowing thunder as I had never heard before; the wind was so fantastically violent that one could not even hear oneself speak. All at once there was a noise like the cracking of a vast whip, the wind increased further and the rain came bucketing down, and seven of the hospital huts collapsed. We let our own home go and rushed to save the men trapped under the tangle of bamboo and palm-leaf.

As we stepped out into the open the violet metallic light of the sky seemed to become more vivid; our bodies felt full of electricity and our hair stood on end. We fought our way through the wind and rain to where a few of the men had already struggled free.

One of the huts had survived, so I and the others tried to help the patients towards it. I was less than ten paces from the entrance when there was a blinding flash and I went down smack on my face just as if somebody had done an earth-shaking rugger-tackle on me. My patient

and I struggled up and found that instead of two there were three of us: another man had been flung between us from inside the hut. We picked him up and carried him in again: he appeared to be dead. He had been standing immediately beside one of the bamboo poles supporting the roof of the hut when the lightning struck: this pole was splintered now into a tangle, and the bush hat the man had been wearing was in shreds: everywhere there was a pungent smell, like that of cordite. The victim was a Dutch Eurasian boy: the lightning must have jumped about three feet to strike him. I ripped off the gas cape he had been wearing and saw that his face and lips were streaked with what looked like violet ink, turning black in places; his hands and feet were charred. I started artificial respiration at once, and twenty minutes later when I placed my ear to his naked violet-streaked chest I thought I could just hear very faint heartbeats. They were probably my own: we took turns at artificial respiration for almost two hours, but had to give up in the end.

We soon had our huts and our hospital sorted out and re-built, and the tedious routine of prison life went on. Some of us started regular games of housey-housey or bingo, played twice a week for very small stakes: large numbers of P.O.W.s turned up, and with the proceeds we were able to buy extra eggs for our hospital patients.

We grew tomatoes, and then scuffled in the night with the low types who tried to steal them; we collected wild mangoes and tamarind pods; I had my own recipe for mango chutney, which was very much in demand to liven up a diet which at the best was still very dull. And so the days went by, while we waited and hoped and wondered.

In September 1944 the Japanese said that two thousand of the fittest men in the camp were to be sent to Japan. This was alarming news: we knew that they had suffered severe set-backs in Burma and that Allied naval forces had conquered many islands not far from the Japanese mainland: we realized that any convoy trying to get through to Japan was bound to come up against opposition at sea. But we had no choice about complying, and each unit in our camp allocated a number of their men, as fairly as possible, to make up the quota.

One hundred and twenty-four men came from 'D' Battalion, and we parted from them with foreboding. The whole party of two thousand went by train to Singapore, and there embarked for Japan. The convoy was attacked, and the ship in which our men were sailing was sunk: they were battened down in the holds and had practically no chance of escaping. Seven men, out of the whole two thousand, were picked up by the Allied submarine which attacked the convoy: the Japanese listed one hundred and five men from 'D' Battalion as missing.

Now when the trains arrived from up country they carried Japanese wounded, more and more of them as time went on, fighting troops evacuated from the battle-fields in Burma. Working parties of our men met these trains and carried the wounded to the Japanese hospital at Tamuang: they had no doctors with them, although we occasionally saw a stumpy little Japanese nurse. All the Japanese, guards and fighting soldiers as well, seemed completely indifferent to the sufferings of their comrades. The wounded men became very alarmed at seeing European faces, thinking that they had fallen into Allied hands; they had no water or cigarettes, and no provision at all had been made to feed them during their long

journey from Burma. Their wounds were septic and full of maggots, and the trucks in which they travelled were thickly fouled. We, prisoners and their enemies, did what we could to ease these men's sufferings, to the utter bewilderment of the other Japanese.

In the Japanese army, it was considered disgraceful to report sick or even to be wounded, while to be taken prisoner was to let the Emperor down and to incur life-long disgrace. Logically enough, this philosophy led many of the wounded men to commit hara-kiri, partly because of the humiliation of being wounded and partly to ease the administrative burden upon the authorities. These men would be reported at home as having died for the Emperor: a far more honourable thing than a safe and ignominious return from the battlefield because of wounds.

In December, various parties left Tamuang for active work in strategic areas: they had to build defences and handle war material under circumstances which made heavy casualties from Allied air attack inevitable, in addition to numerous deaths from illness: no doctors or drugs were sent with these parties, which were run on 'speedo' lines.

The Japs were plainly becoming both alarmed and bloody-minded. Now they said that officers had to be separated from their men: presumably they did this in order to disrupt morale and discipline among us, and to reduce the probability of any kind of organized action on our part. In a way it was an intelligent decision for them to take, but we had all been together throughout our captivity, and we felt the parting keenly. We realized now that in those terrible days when Singapore fell, the authorities had been looking ahead to the problems of our

captivity; they had persuaded the Japs to keep officers and men together in order to keep discipline and to reduce incidents to the minimum, and the Japanese had agreed in the hope of reducing the number of their soldiers who would be needed to guard the prisoners. In practice, this arrangement had contributed a great deal to our ability to cope with prison life.

Now, in January 1945, the remains of 'D' Battalion turned out in force to say good-bye to our C.O., Major Clark, S.S.V.F., and his adjutant Captain Lucas, 9th Coast R.A. These officers had done a great deal for the Battalion, which had become well-known because of the results of their unfailing tact and good judgment.

The officers were sent to Kamburi: I and several other medical officers were granted permission to stay behind with the men, and W. O. Christopher took over as Camp Commandant.

On 12th May the medical officers and men at Tamuang left for a place called Pratchai, one hundred and ten miles away on the other side of Bangkok, towards the Indo-Chinese frontier. We did not like the sound of this at all: it looked as if we might be moved into Indo-China and so on, north and east, behind the retreating Japanese army.

We were paraded at the crack of dawn, as usual; each man had to stand beside his kit, and we were not allowed to return to the huts or even visit the latrines while the Japs made a last determined effort to discover our secret wireless. They hunted through the whole of our kit, and then even through each other's kit: they only overlooked one place, and there our wireless was. One of our men was acting as batman to the Japanese Camp Commandant, and anticipating a grand search of this

kind, he had taken the liberty of hiding the set, still inside its R.A.M.C. water-bottle, in the great man's kit.

They marched us to Tamuang station, and after some time the train from Burma came puffing and clanking along, and we had to help a large number of badly wounded Japanese soldiers out of the filthy cattle trucks. They were in a dreadful state, and as before, they looked deadly scared at the sight of Europeans. We gave them water and cigarettes and climbed into the trucks, then off we went in a shower of sparks from the wood-burning engine. Two hours later we arrived at a place called Non Pladok in the middle of a tropical downpour. The Japs took us to some empty bamboo huts, which were indescribably dirty and full of fleas and falling to bits; we felt miserably wet and hungry.

Next morning they gave us a minute amount of boiled rice and then locked us into cattle trucks — covered ones this time. We waited in them for half an hour, and then we were told to get out and climb on to the roofs, to make room inside for several hundred Indian National Army soldiers who had turned up.

These troops had been captured in Singapore and had been persuaded by the Japs to change sides: now they rode inside while we sat on top. The rain stopped and the sun burned into us and made the roof feel red-hot: there we sat for three hours, not being allowed to get down and not being given any water, until an engine came to pull the train to Bangkok.

Once we were on the move we felt cooler, but it was hard work hanging on: many men were nearly brushed off by overhanging trees and bamboo, and a good deal of kit jolted off and was lost.

At five that afternoon we arrived at a place called

Nakon Chye, where the train stopped for a delightful reason. The big bridge carrying the line across the river had been completely destroyed by our bombers. The Japanese had managed to get their own way for too long: it was cheering to look at this mass of twisted steel girders and these battered concrete uprights.

We were told that we would have to spend the night here, out in the open, and in the morning cross the river to take another train for Bangkok. There were flooded paddy fields beside the railway, and many of the men jumped into the water to cool their bodies, which were the colour of ripe tomatoes, and even drank some of the water unboiled, contrary to my orders.

The Indians left the cattle trucks and went away, and the Japs in the kindness of their hearts locked the trucks up so that we could not sleep inside. We crawled underneath, hungry and thirsty: it was possible to achieve a certain degree of comfort with the head on one sleeper, the backside on another and the feet on a third.

Never had we been so bitten by mosquitoes as we were that night, and within the next two weeks practically every one of us went down with the shakes, while the men who had bathed in the paddy fields and drunk the unboiled water there developed a disease called leptospiro-ictero-haemorrhagica, and some died of it. This is an acute and often fatal specific infection characterized by sudden fever, together with jaundice and subcutaneous haemorrhage: it is caused by a spirochaete and gets into the system through skin abrasions by contact with water which has been contaminated with rat urine.

After a very restless and uncomfortable night we got up, marked all over, and crossed the river in barges.

Then we had to wait for four hours in the blazing sun for a train to take us to Bangkok. The river water was much too dirty to drink, but we filtered some of it through dirty pieces of cloth and boiled it over a fire, so that after a good deal of work each of us was able to rejoice in half a pint of boiled mud. At one they brought us some rice, and soon after two a train arrived: we climbed into cattle trucks and went rattling and puffing towards Bangkok.

As we approached the city, we were amazed to see the extent and accuracy of Allied bombing: everywhere strategic targets had been destroyed, while the houses around seemed undamaged. We arrived at Bangkok goods station at six in the evening; the station had been practically demolished, and we pointed excitedly at the different signs of devastation all round us.

But when we got off the train, we were rather disconcerted to find that the place was packed with war material: everywhere there were bombs, ammunition, trench mortars, everything. In a tumbledown shed nearby we saw some tough-looking Japanese fighting troops, no doubt waiting for trains to take them to the various battle fronts. It is a curious fact, but one which has often been noted, that when troops fighting on opposite sides meet, there exists a kind of camaraderie, almost of friendship between them: and before long our men were exchanging cigarettes with these Japs and chattering with them like old comrades. But these were fighting men and looked on us as soldiers: they were in every way preferable to the syphilitic runts who had been looking after us in camp, and who had in all probability never been near any kind of action.

We felt very uneasy in the station, thinking of what would happen if the Allies attacked it while we were

there. Eventually, at about ten o'clock, we were marched away and packed on to barges which seemed already overloaded with petrol, ammunition, rice, and other supplies.

All night long we went chugging down the river towed by a pom-pom, still without food and water, so that we drank the dirty river-water ignoring the danger of cholera. At dawn we arrived at Bangkok docks; the buildings there looked modern and well-built, but we saw that a good many of them had been bombed. Some local Siamese told us that this area had been attacked very severely and that the Japanese only kept working parties of P.O.W.s there for three days. One party had left the previous day, after being bombed heavily: the walls were spattered with blood.

By nine the barges were unloaded, and the Japs gave us twenty minutes to eat our breakfast. It was most acceptable: a meat and vegetable stew with rice. They fed us well while we were in the docks, giving us plenty of meat, no doubt in order to keep us happy in this very dangerous situation.

I held a sick parade and found that seventy men were unfit for work: the Japanese said that they would allow fifty to go sick and no more. We had to make what we could of that situation. Then they put us to work, handling bombs and ammunition and building gun emplacements and defences of all kinds in the docks and in the city of Bangkok itself. There was plenty of fresh water for washing, and in the evening a lovely cool breeze came up the river; we were fed well, and in general our short stay in the dock area was very pleasant except for the nervous tension induced by our constant fear of attack from the air.

We left for Pratchai on 18th May. The train arrived, and while we were loading it with war material the engine was unhitched and hidden in a siding which had been roofed in and camouflaged for this purpose. Afterwards we climbed into the loaded trucks and sat more or less uncomfortably upon the stuff we had put there, and waited for the engine to come out of hiding again and tug us away.

Eventually the engine emerged from its hidey-hole and was coupled on to the train, and almost at once the air-raid warning sounded. Immediately all the Jap guards jumped out of the cattle trucks and bolted the doors on us, and then stood by ready to dive for shelter. Suddenly someone in my truck pointed across the river and bellowed hysterically, 'Christ, look, there they are!' The bombers came in quickly and low, and we could see white puffs of gunfire around them: I heard a great chuffing and panting as our engine, once more detached from the train, nipped smartly into hiding again. Down came the bombs and exploded thunderously across the river: presumably they had been ordered to bomb some specific target there, as otherwise they would not have neglected such an obviously juicy target as our train was at the time.

We breathed again; the men were green in the face, licking dry lips and trying to swallow saliva that was not there.

After about twenty minutes the 'all-clear' sounded and the Jap guards climbed on board again; then the engine came back once more, and we thanked heaven and all the little saints to find ourselves pulling out at last from that very unhealthy neighbourhood.

At Bangkok town our train was hitched on to another,

similarly loaded, and we moved off in a dark tropical night fitfully illuminated by firelight and sparks from our engine and by occasional reflected gleams from the long steel rails, stretching ahead of us into Indo-China.

The truck doors were fixed open for the journey, which made us feel a little safer, but we were not comfortable. One of the guards insisted on resting his thickly-populated head on my lap; the men kept whispering urgent suggestions that I should push him out of the truck, and I did feel tempted.

At eleven next morning we got off the train at a place called Saburi and set out on a nine-mile march to Pratchai. On we went, at first along a main road, and then up a cart track with blackberry bushes on both sides: we might have been going on a Sunday afternoon walk in the English countryside, except that over on the left we could see a Siamese temple. The setting sun threw a great curved mountain range ahead of us into sharp relief. Eventually we forked off again and arrived at the camp, which had been built on a paddy field right in the middle of the horseshoe-curve of those mountains.

It seemed a very peaceful place and the landscape was wonderful; here we were to build defensive works of an elaborate kind. There were to be numerous gun emplacements connected by tunnels, and a complicated series of other tunnels or caves for storage.

In the same camp there was a battalion of Japanese fighting troops, training very intensively: we pointed out to the Japanese officer in charge, Captain Suzuki, that according to international law fighting troops should not be in the same camp as prisoners, but our objections were ignored, and all day long we saw and heard the most realistic and noisy kinds of battle training. As these

tough-looking little specimens ran screaming and yelling to plunge their bayonets repeatedly into the stuffed dummies which had been set up there to act the part of our soldiers, it was very easy to imagine them becoming crazy with the excitement and blood lust which their training was intended to stimulate, and turning upon us prisoners as we passed by.

This was farming country and we had plenty of eggs, meat and vegetables. But they made us work very hard, and it was obvious from the military character of the work that it was an area which they would not abandon lightly. Their preparations were elaborate and showed a good deal of ingenuity: to help in the movement of materials and supplies, they built a miniature railway made entirely of wood — wheels, carriages, rails and all; it worked very well. We found the general situation ominous and depressing.

But the Japanese were worried too; they doubled the guards and watched us closely day and night. Also they found it necessary to keep a close watch over their Korean troops, who were becoming openly disaffected and rebellious. One of these guards, whom we called the Black Prince, said that the P.O.W.s were all going to be killed; he used to pester me every day for poison to bump off Captain Suzuki. He had been friendly with me ever since I had cured his pox, and I put his plan to our camp authorities, but it was decided that the time was not yet ripe for a move of this kind. By now there were two battalions of Japanese fighting troops in the camp and only a short distance away up the mountainside there were some twenty thousand more of them. Their guns seemed to be trained on the camp: we were not really in a position to act tough.

But the Koreans did have a go at Captain Suzuki, in spite of our discouragement: they attacked him when he was asleep, but he drew his Samurai sword and wounded three of them. Immediately after this all the Koreans were disarmed, and they disappeared and went underground at once.

Their fears were fully justified: the Japanese quite obviously intended to murder us all, if only as a last resort. All round the camp there was one of those great trenches, and the machine-gun posts were manned day and night. We found out later on that standing orders had gone out from Tokio, to the effect that if the Allies landed in Siam or Malaya all P.O.W.s were to be killed at once. Landings were in fact planned for 18th August in Siam and 9th September in Malaya; the Air Force did not know that there were prisoners at Pratchai, and the area was earmarked for very heavy and concentrated bombing to coincide with the landings. All things considered we survived by a pretty narrow margin.

More and more frequently, news came in of new reverses and losses suffered by the Japs and the tension and restlessness in the air became more acute. One evening a horribly wounded man came to see me: it was the Black Prince, who had managed to sneak into the camp from whatever secret hiding place he and the other Koreans had found. He had been savagely attacked by a party of Siamese natives, and he had had his nose cut clean off, leaving two bleeding vertical slits where his nostrils had been. I dressed the wound and gave him something for the terrible pain he was suffering, and then sent him packing: if the Japs had found him, he and I would both have lost more than our noses. The Siamese seemed to have a special itch to get at the Koreans, who

had apparently been in the habit of molesting their women.

Allied planes now flew over several times a day; the Japs were on edge and went fully armed the whole time.

On 15th August, 1945, they gave orders that six hundred P.O.W.s were to leave camp next morning for a place, they said, some forty miles away over the hills. This did not sound very good: we thought they were probably starting to break us up into small parties for more convenient despatch.

In the evenings we lay on our bamboo slats, tensed up, talking to each other in hushed whispers. Then we would hear the voice of the gecko, a ten-inch tree lizard of those parts, regarded as a sign of good fortune by the Malays and the Siamese. 'Gecko, gecko, gecko,' the creature would say, while we counted its cries with close fascinated attention: if it calls out seven times, good luck is certainly on the way. And now, as the time of our liberation grew nearer, the geckoes could be heard continuously all over the camp, and it seemed to us that they always spoke seven times.

Men are peculiar creatures: this omen or prophecy affected most powerfully, carrying the deepest and most immediate conviction that good news was coming.

We looked out across the barbed wire and the camp perimeter ditch next morning, 16th August, and watched in silence while the Japs did strange things. At first they were very busy burning papers; later on they disappeared and emerged again wearing their best uniforms: we wondered if they were all going to commit hara-kiri. At half past three their bugle sounded for parade, and Captain Suzuki addressed them for about twenty minutes. We could see as he spoke how their expressions

became more and more deeply depressed. When their commander's speech was over they shouted 'Banzai!' three times, taking their caps off and bowing in the direction of the rising sun.

We watched, wondering what to make of all this. Then we saw a familiar figure signalling to us from behind a hut: it was Red-Balls, one of the few Koreans who had not deserted. He held his hands up, waving to us, which some of us interpreted as meaning that the Japs had surrendered, while others thought it was more likely to mean that we were going to be made to hold our hands up and be shot.

The Jap adjutant arrived, interrupting our discussion, and asked Lt.-Col. Harvey and Warrant Officer Christopher to go across, as Captain Suzuki wanted to speak to them.

The Japanese fighting troops on the other side of the camp were facing us and watching everything we did very carefully. We waited in deathly silence, suspecting some kind of trap or deception.

Suddenly the tense awful silence was shattered by the grand brassy tumult of our own bugle. This had been confiscated earlier on so that we could not use it as a signal for attack or revolt; now, we had been watching the Japanese troops so intently that none of us had seen the bugler move quietly over to Suzuki's house.

The bugle sounded 'Fall in at the Double', and the echoes rolled away into the hills and died into a moment of utter silence. Then a vast shout arose and from all over our camp the men came, some running, some crawling, some limping, some with no pants because they had been caught in the latrines, and all heading for the parade ground.

We stood on parade. Lt.-Col. Harvey, R.A.M.C., being the senior British officer present, addressed the camp. 'Men, I am requested by Captain Suzuki to tell you that the war is over and you are free.'

Bill Harvey could not go on; his voice was lost in the glorious din of rejoicing as men hugged and kissed each other, jumped around, slapped one another on the back, or stood weeping silently and muttering incredulously to themselves.

'Now, silence please: I have an urgent message for you. Suzuki requests that for your own protection you should hold over all demonstrations until the Japanese fighting troops have left the camp. These men are confused and bewildered, and it would only take a very slight incident to start a general massacre. So please, for your own sakes, keep away from the Jap troops and on this side of the camp.' And even while Bill Harvey was still speaking, we saw some of the Japanese troops starting to move out of the camp, carrying their flag as if in defiance of the Emperor's order to capitulate.

That night, few of us slept very much; we sat and talked until the wee hours.

Next morning, someone found a pole and hoisted the Union Jack which we had kept among us for three and a half years, a last bit of England to lie over the naked body of one prisoner after another before he was tipped into this alien soil. The gentle morning breeze made the flag flutter lazily over our heads. I held my sick parade: the men looked different, not so dejected and low: they held their heads up smartly.

The next few days were difficult. The Japanese fighting troops were still refusing flatly to become P.O.W.s; and while we took over the guarding of our camp, the

Japs insisted on still maintaining their own armed guard over the enormous quantity of warlike material in the neighbourhood. This was reasonable, since bands of Siamese roamed the district at night time and broke into the supply dumps whenever they could find an opportunity. The nights were full of rifle-music and the whine of bullets; having survived so far, we were all over-cautious and horribly nervous.

After a few days a British paratroop officer visited the camp, armed to the teeth, and accompanied by a sergeant with a wireless transmitter, who was obviously keeping in touch with his base in case of an ambush. They had a long session with Captain Suzuki, and then we crowded round asking questions. The officer had red hair and a splendid moustache: he was in the Guards. We asked about everything, from the shows in London to the progress of the war, and he told us about the Japanese intention of killing us all off and about the effect of the atomic bombs.

The world has talked about nuclear weapons at great length since August 1945; but I cannot get it out of my head that if it had not been for these weapons we would all have died there at Pratchai.

And now the wheels started turning, slowly and confusedly but in the right direction, and we set about enjoying ourselves as much as possible to fill in the time before we went home. We got hold of a car and set out for the bright lights and the gay night life of Saburi, on an occasion which started with a little peaceful drinking, went on to a lot of rowdy singing, and ended up with the car crunching into the camp perimeter ditch so that I had to be hauled out with a rope. Later on the General commanding the Siamese troops at Saburi invited a lot of

us to a party at their headquarters mess: a wonderful party, with any number of lovely Siamese girls. We were sternly reminded to remember that we were gentlemen, and we focussed our attention therefore on learning the art of Siamese dancing.

The R.A.F. kept on flying over, rolling and circling around in a festive manner and dropping clothes and medical supplies, including some which I had never heard of: penicillin baffled me, but I soon found it marvellous for leptospiro-ictero-haemorrhagica.

We all trooped off to Saburi to be photographed in our shaggy jungle beards: I felt ridiculously over-dressed in full uniform, complete with Sam Browne belt and Red Cross armlet: and while I was in Saburi, a man whom I took to be a Siamese asked me in a furtive confused way to come along and visit a sick man. I went with him, but the distance seemed long and the fellow seemed vague and evasive: I was just about sure that this was some kind of ambush when we arrived at a secret camp in the jungle full of heavily-armed Korean deserters. Among them was no less a character than Red-Balls himself: one of the men was very ill and I was asked to attend to him, which I did after a certain amount of heart-searching: during the three and a half years of our captivity, these Koreans had been the most savage of our guards.

On 8th September Lady Louis Mountbatten came to visit us: we felt a bit impatient at the thought of a ceremonial do, but we bulled up the camp and gave her a great welcome. It was wonderful to see a white woman again and to be told of the sympathy which had been felt for us and the efforts made on our behalf while we were prisoners; but it was shattering to be told by her that

Winston Churchill was no longer Prime Minister. His voice and utterances had been picked up on our secret wireless and had meant a lot to us: it seemed almost impossible that at this moment he should have been given the push.

By now all my seriously sick patients had been evacuated, including the faithful Pinky Riley, who had suffered more than his fair share of tropical diseases, including thirty-eight malarial attacks in addition to dysentery and avitaminosis. I felt that the long burden of medical responsibility had been lifted from me, and I asked Bill Harvey to make arrangements, if possible, for me to get away to Bangkok fairly soon: I had a debt of gratitude to pay to Herr Singenthaler and Herr Tanner, and also I was anxious to get away to England as soon as possible. Everybody wanted to get there of course, but for most of them it would be the end of the journey when they did: I would still have a further journey to make, to Las Palmas. Bill saw the point and made the necessary arrangements, but I had to be very discreet about it, since it was not practical at that time to evacuate all the medical officers.

So on 10th September at about nine in the morning, I left Pratchai as medical escort to a party of sick men. I had packed my gear in an unobtrusive manner and stowed it on one of the lorries, but I left a few odds and ends lying about conspicuously, so as to give the impression that I was only going to escort this party to Bangkok and then return.

The convoy bumped its way to Bangkok, first down that narrow track between blackberry bushes and then along the main road, following at first the route which we had painfully marched such a very short time previously, but in what already seemed a different and

remote world. It was very hard to believe that it was really happening at last.

Late that afternoon, I found myself being asked by a very gracious European lady whether I took sugar and cream in my tea. I sat nervously on the edge of my chair in Frau Tanner's drawing-room, trying to manage her delicate porcelain and feeling like a shaggy wild man of the woods. My beard had gone, and my skin was yellow and blotchy where it had been ; I must have looked horrible, but Frau Tanner was most considerate and helped me to relax. The next day I found Herr Singenthaler and expressed as well as I could, my feelings about the help he had given us. There are any number of men who owe their lives to the generosity and devotion of Herr Singenthaler, Herr Tanner and Boon Phong.

Bill Harvey was in Bangkok also by now, at the Red Cross Hospital, and he arranged for the next stage of my journey, appointing me medical escort to a party of eleven ex-prisoners who were being evacuated next day to Rangoon. It was very sad, as these men were insane: when the time came to get them on board the aircraft, some of them were docile, having heard and understood the word 'home', but others were raving. I had to use morphia on all of them so as to avoid the danger of trouble in the air.

During the years of captivity, we had all felt vaguely that a victorious conclusion to the war would mean the sudden and total end of all the misery and disaster which we saw every day. But men who had been released from captivity were still dying in large numbers, in spite of the care which could be given to them, and my fellow-passengers on this flight were sobering reminders that a

war goes on inflicting casualties and causing suffering for a long time after the guns have stopped firing.

It was wonderful to see the activity at Bangkok Aerodrome: large aircraft circled continuously awaiting their turn to land, and each one in due course unloaded a couple of dozen fully armed soldiers, and then took on board the same number of impatient ex-prisoners. There were Japanese soldiers here and there, doing odd jobs: one of them went rather close to an aircraft, and the pilot came up and gave him a thundering great kick to teach him to keep his distance: they knew all about Japanese fanaticism, and were taking no chances. But the sight appalled me: Good God, the madman! Didn't he know it was suicide to strike a Jap? For a moment I waited tensely for the vicious crash of a rifle butt; but the Jap grinned apologetically and walked away.

At Rangoon my patients were whisked off to hospital, and the rest of us were taken to a W.V.S. canteen, where charming girls came up and made much of us; we were not used to this, and found ourselves inexplicably liable to hysterical tears.

Later we went by lorry to Rangoon University, which was being used as a hospital and transit camp; it was full of ex-prisoners awaiting repatriation. There I heard that Vincent Bennett had arrived ahead of me and had used his Irish blarney well enough to get appointed as M.O. to the officers sailing for England in a few days on the P. and O. ship *Corfu*.

Well, if Vincent could do this, so could I; I began to scheme furiously. Going back to the town I thumbed a lift in a Naval jeep containing a real live brass-hat Admiral. As we drove along together I chatted about my plans, and happened to mention that I had a long way

to go since my home was at Las Palmas in the Canary Islands. The Admiral looked up sharply and asked me my name; and then 'You aren't by any chance related to Lt.-Cdr. Pavillard, are you?' I replied that indeed he was my brother. 'By George, your brother!' bellowed the Admiral, 'Do you know what they call him in the Navy? The mad Spaniard! I nearly had him up on a court martial for holding up the whole blasted convoy at Londonderry while he tried to ride up the ship's gangway on a donkey!' He told me that my brother was in command of the Canadian frigate H.M.C.S. *Sussexvale* and had been awarded the D.S.C.

Wonderful coincidences do happen: the D.M.S. turned out to be a friend of this Admiral, and that same evening I had a phone message telling me that I had been appointed medical officer in charge of troops on the *Corfu*, sailing next morning.

Rice: a lovely big plateful of rice. It was what we had most grievously missed, most passionately yearned for during the long, long years of our captivity. The voyage was over. We had disembarked at Southampton among cheers and music and speeches. We had given interviews to the press, we had sent off postcards and made telephone calls, and now we sat down to the first meal on English soil: shepherd's pie, followed by rice pudding. Perhaps our nerves were a little upset; perhaps we had forgotten our prettiest Sunday-school manners; but we rose up wrathfully and flung the damnable stuff across the room. Rice!

We hit it up properly and did everything. London was wonderful, but I was thinking of Las Palmas. Quite

impossible, quite out of the question, I was told by the people concerned with shipping; so I put to good account my recent prolonged training in the arts of fiddling, and signed on very illicitly as a ship's surgeon, with a view to staging a malarial attack when the ship was passing near Las Palmas. Fate paid me out and I really did go down with the grandfather and grandmother of all malarial bouts that ever were. But I was at home, and the world was a lovely place.

It is, however, a very difficult world to understand. I and countless others had survived six years of war, and now my sister Nancy died after an operation for appendicitis. I remembered those earlier operations, performed by candlelight in a filthy place upon disease-ridden living skeletons; they recovered, but Nancy died.

A few months later I found myself under canvas again; not in a jungle camp stinking of death, but in Kensington Gardens. I had been chosen to represent Singapore in the Victory Parade on 8th June. When that day came, I marched along under the flags and the decorations with three other officers, leading the Malayan contingent to salute the King. It was a great day, and I felt proud of the men behind me; we held our heads high, as we had held them high on that earlier march, when the flags waving around us had been Japanese ones.

The hunger, the blood and the cruelty had vanished with so many of our friends into the past; we wore new uniforms, and a new life lay before us. But we had not been issued with new unmarked memories to match, and the scars inflicted on us during those terrible days are there for life.



THE AUTHOR

Stanley S. Pavillard, M.B.E., E.D., was educated at Ellesmere College, Shropshire, and qualified as a doctor of medicine at the University of Edinburgh in 1939. He went to Malaya in 1940 as Medical Officer to the Penang Volunteer Forces and in 1941 was transferred to Singapore as Medical Officer to the 1st Battalion Straits Settlements Volunteer Force. After the Japanese overran Singapore Dr. Pavillard spent three-and-a-half years as a P.O.W., his experience of which forms the content of this book. After the war he attended various post-graduate courses in Edinburgh and the University of Madrid. At present he has a private practice in Las Palmas, Canary Islands. He has contributed various articles to the *British Medical Journal* and his hobbies are reading, deep-sea fishing and swimming.

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